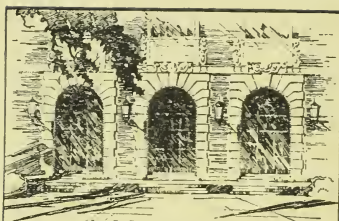


THE WYNDHAM FAMILY

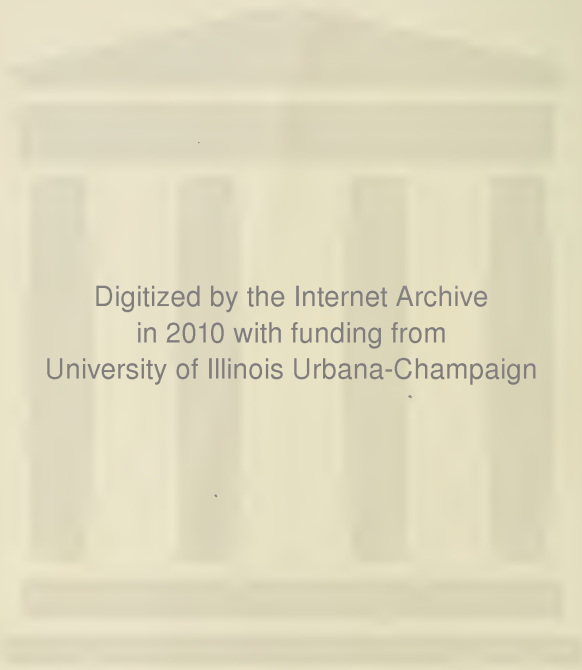


A STORY OF MODERN LIFE



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THE

WYNDHAM FAMILY:

A Story of Modern Life,

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MOUNT ST. LAWRENCE."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

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THE WYNDHAM FAMILY.



CHAPTER I.

THE GLORY OF SERVICE.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock at night, the hour when quiet people think of undressing and going to bed, and when the gay world of London begins to turn its mind to dressing and going out to seek amusement. A drizzling rain was falling, falling coldly, as it falls in early spring, when the wind is in the east ; and you might have heard it fitfully sighing and wailing, had it not been for the monotonous roll of wheels upon the pavement, which, save for an hour or two of the night, seldom gives the ear a truce, even for a few short moments. People who habitually live in towns are apt to find the quiet of the country act as a damper on their spirits ; but, on the other hand, I believe that those who are used to its deep peace and silence are not seldom impressed with a feeling of melancholy by these never-ceasing tokens of the stir of a world with which they have no connection, and which takes no interest in them. Nature, in whose loving presence they have more or less consciously lived, is shut out, and they are shut in with a world which they know not, and which knows not them.

Perhaps some such thoughts or feelings might be passing

over the mind of a young girl, whose cheek still glowed with the roses which pure air and a country life had nursed there, as she sat for an idle moment, and paused over her work, in a good-sized but three-parts underground kitchen in Berkeley Square. Those roses were a little heightened just now, and a tear or two seemed to have lately trickled down from the bright clear eye, for the corner of the apron had been raised, and had left a tell-tale smear across the otherwise clean face.

"Crying, Mary?" inquired a bolder-looking girl, some years her senior, who entered the kitchen abruptly, and cast an inquisitive glance at her fellow-servant; "and if you have been crying," she added, with some good-nature, mixed with a dash of bitterness, "I am sure no wonder; that is, if you are given to that sort of thing."

"I am not given to crying," said Mary, "but how should you know what I may have been crying about?"

"I can guess, I dare say. Such a life as this is! But come, you'll never get those things washed to-night."

"What sort of life? What do you just mean?" replied the girl.

"Why, something very different from life upstairs, don't you think so?"

"Of course; that is because we are servants. I know that. I never think of crying because I am a servant, Rachel. We are not unkindly treated here."

A pause.

"Humph, no; we live well,—so do the horses, and so does Missis's lapdog; and we work hard,—and so do the horses, and so does *not* Fillipin, or whatever that plaything is called. But then we are not horses, Mary, no more than Missis and the young ladies. We work and they play; did that never strike you, you little simpleton? And then *their* play is *our* work. Now they had company to dinner to-day, all very amusing, and your share is washing dishes;

and they are going out to a ball in an hour's time, and so Mrs. Roper will have the fun of sitting up, with a very bad headache, as I know she has got, and after stitching her fingers off all day, to alter a gown for Miss Gertrude, which Missis said did not fit, and is not satisfied with after all."

"We are servants," repeated Mary, but in rather a fainter tone this time.

"Yes, servants; and did you ever think what a funny thing it is to be a servant?"

"No."

"Well, I'll tell you, then. It is to work and toil till your bones ache and your head is heavy, that others may laugh and dance and sing and do nothing."

"They understand a number of things," rejoined Mary, "we know nothing about. Look at all their books, and all that sort of thing. They are educated, and have learning; and we have none, and can only work."

"They have *money*, you mean," said Rachel; "as for their books, what good are they to anybody? They read story-books to amuse themselves. It's all that sort of thing lies on the table in the drawing-room. James fetches them from the library sometimes, and takes a look at them as he is walking along. Some's a cut above him, I think; but it's all the same, he says: about lords and ladies, and Miss This and Mr. That, and falling in love, and a pack of nonsense. Now, I say this is very funny, isn't it? that more than half the world should work like beasts of burden that the rest may keep holiday every day and all days, and read nice story-books!" Rachel warmed as she spoke, and her countenance, which was not lacking in worldly shrewdness and intelligence, assumed anything but a pleasing expression.

"Hush!" replied the young girl; "this is wrong, Rachel; besides, you know it is no business of ours."

"No business of ours?" and Rachel raised her fist em-

phatically, but stopped short as another individual entered the kitchen. She was a woman of middle age, though her figure had still the slightness and elasticity of youth, and her features that delicacy which some persons may be observed to retain even to the most advanced years. Nothing, indeed, betrayed her age but a certain faded and wasted hue, which, as time goes on, gradually supplants the richer tints of youth, for there was not a shade of grey in the light hair, smoothly parted on her no less smooth forehead.

"Rachel," she said, "the call-bell has rung for you twice." This piece of information dismissed the housemaid. "Mary," she continued, "you ought to have finished by this time. You have been lingering over your work."

"I know I am behind," replied Mary, with something of a melancholy snuffle and an attempt at haste which, however, chiefly consisted in making a good deal more noise with the dishes. Her companion, or, rather, no less a personage than her superior officer, the cook, watched her for a moment in silence, and then began quietly to help her.

Mary now muttered in a half justificatory tone, "There is so much to do."

"There is," was the simple reply.

"It is very hard," added the girl, a little inclined to whimper.

"No, not hard ; you may remember I warned you before you took the place, that work here was different from what you had been used to. I said it was not more I believed than you or any strong girl could do ; but to get through it properly you must keep on at it."

"Ah ! keep on at it," exclaimed Mary, "that is just it, Mrs. Tyrell—like a horse or an ass ; that is what is so trying, for you know we are not horses ;"—and Mary paused and blushed, for she felt she was not uttering her own sentiments, and she felt, too, that Mrs. Tyrell was looking at her with a little gentle surprise.

"Mary, that is not like you."

"Well, I must confess it was Rachel's idea, not mine, but it seemed true ; I couldn't say it wasn't true."

"Poor Rachel !" said Mrs. Tyrell. "But now I see you are not one who can work and talk at the same time, so suppose we get these things done before saying another word."

Mary muttered some thanks, as Mrs. Tyrell lent her active assistance ; and indeed thanks were no more than her due, for not every cook would have shown herself as kind and forbearing to a dawdling kitchenmaid rather out of humour ; everything was soon in its place, and the kitchen clock struck eleven.

"There is nothing more to keep you, Mary," said Mrs. Tyrell mildly, and glancing round, "so you can go to bed."

"Only, only," stammered Mary, a strong disposition to cry choking her utterance, "that I wish to say I am sorry ; indeed I am."

Mrs. Tyrell had walked to the fire, and was taking off some of the coals preparatory to retiring herself. "Come here, my good girl," she said, "and sit down a moment." She drew a chair, and seating herself by the now weeping girl, took her broad working hands kindly between her own more delicately-made but thin and almost attenuated fingers. "Mary, you are a good Catholic ; don't you think you ought to try to attract Rachel by your good example and sweet words, instead of giving ear to her fractious complaints ?"

"I told her she was wrong ; but after she was gone I felt as if she was in the right ; in one way, I mean."

"I understand. You knew she was wrong, but what she had said had made some impression all the same."

"I could not help it."

"No, Mary ; but you can help turning impressions into

thoughts, and consenting to them and making them your own. Drive them from you, and they cannot hurt you."

Mary was silent for a moment; then, looking full in Mrs. Tyrell's face, she said, "I know it is wrong to complain, but I don't see so clearly that there is nothing to complain of; that is what is difficult. Tell me; is it wrong to have such thoughts?" And she looked earnestly, with her full lustrous eyes wide open, into the placid countenance of her kind friend.

Now what is that kind friend going to say to her? Is she going to say that the place is not a hard one? But it *is* rather a hard one; and I think, though as yet we know but little of her, that Mrs. Tyrell loves truth. The family which Mary served lived a great deal in the world and saw a good deal of company at home; they were withal not very rich; it was necessary, therefore, to study economy in one way, if it could not be consulted in another; it was necessary to make a good show upon limited means; and perhaps there are no situations in which servants' labour is more taxed than such as these. The Wyndhams kept only just so many as could absolutely do the work; and this work was constant.

"Do you mean, Mary," replied Mrs. Tyrell to her subordinate's eager question, "that the work is hard, or that it is hard that you should have to do it?"

"Well, both," rejoined Mary. "It does seem hard, when one comes to think of it, that we should all work without ceasing, while others are taking their ease up-stairs all day long, and going out for their amusement three parts of the night. I don't mean that everybody ought to be sweeping and cleaning saucepans and dusting. If people can afford to pay to get such things done, it is quite fair, and gives the means of earning their bread to those who are poor. God made the rich and the poor too, I know that, and I should say nothing if I saw them doing anything useful in their way,

or if so much work was not thrown upon us, just to enable them to keep holiday every day of the year. But I know it is no business of ours, and I was just telling Rachel so when you came in ; only, if it is wrong to think all this very hard, I wish you would help to put the thought out of my head, for I would not encourage a sinful thought for all the world ; indeed I would not."

"I quite believe that, Mary ; and now what you have said yourself ought to be enough for you. If these things puzzle you and vex you, you can dismiss them by saying to yourself, 'It is no business of mine.' You know your duty, and there is no call for you to consider whether others do theirs. We had best never think of such things. It only leads to rash judgments. The less we reason upon things the better. We are too ignorant, besides, to judge ; and, if we were not so, God is the judge of others, not we. Think, too, how little you know of any occupation beyond your own. Mr. Wyndham spends a good part of the four-and-twenty hours in the House of Commons about the nation's business. How do you know he is not very useful there ? At any rate he is doing his duty as Member of Parliament, and comes back very tired, I know."

"But, Missis ?" suggested Mary, doubtfully.

"Mrs. Wyndham, as a good wife, must make his home comfortable and cheerful for her husband. People who have had bodily work, like us, want bodily rest ; but people who have had head work, which you and I perhaps know very little about, want to rest their minds ; and so they need the recreation of a little society."

"But Missis and the young ladies take a great deal of it on their own account, and go out several nights in the week ; and Master does not always go, or comes home much earlier than they do."

"Mr. Wyndham may himself wish them to mix with the world and make acquaintances. For anything you

know, this may be done entirely to please him ; what his reasons may be I do not think we can judge. Perhaps he may think his daughters would be happier married, like himself, and may choose to give them the opportunity of settling themselves in life. I say all this to show you how much you may through ignorance misjudge persons, particularly those who are in another class of life. But supposing it were just as you say, and that they really are the idle and frivolous beings you imagine, you ought only to feel the greater gratitude to God for the much more favourable position in which He has been pleased to place you."

"More favourable?"

"Yes, more favourable. I mean, of course, to your soul's interests."

"I cannot see that. They have so much more time to give to God and so many more means of learning how to please Him."

"One person, for the matter of that, has just as much time to give to God as another," said Mrs. Tyrell ; "since every one has and can give every moment of life ; but, I repeat, your state in life is much more favourable ; there is no state of life so favourable as a servant's—none ; no state on earth so blessed or so honourable."

As Mary continued silent, more from surprise, however, than acquiescence, Mrs. Tyrell went on quietly, her eyes fixed on the embers and a little as if she was talking to herself—

"What so honourable as to serve ? What so weak as to require service ? Who are most served ? Babies. Who is it who is always serving ? The Everlasting God, who waits upon His whole creation at every instant of time, or it would fall back into nothing. Who came to minister and not to be ministered to ? Christ Himself ; and he who sits and rules in His place on earth calls himself 'the servant of the servants of God.'"

"That is our holy Father the Pope," observed Mary ; "and I know we call priests ministers, which means servants ; but they serve in holy things, which keep God in their minds ; they don't scrub floors and wash plates and cook dinners, and have the bell rung for them every minute by a master or mistress, who seem—I don't say they are, but who seem—to be thinking a deal more about their own comfort than God's service. Oh, Mrs. Tyrell, I assure you, what vexes me most is that I feel all this bustle and driving about is doing me harm. I was so much better in the country ; everything there used to remind me of God, and I got up so cheerful, and the freshness of the morning came to me like the breath of God's own grace, and I saw His beautiful sun rise ; and, though the work was sometimes a little rough, Missis worked too, and had a kind and pleasant word for me often besides. Oh, it was so different ! I didn't mind service then."

"You will never be happy, child, till you think of service differently from what you do now. Is not God in the town as well as the country ? A farmer's wife you found a pleasanter mistress than a London lady. Perhaps so ; but, if you take that so much to heart, it shows that you served Mrs. Jenkins then and serve Mrs. Wyndham now, and God very little. We are all, you know, God's servants ; but service is blessed, Mary, because it makes our outward life so very like our inner and true life ; we servants ought at least to be in no danger of forgetting that we are here in this world only to obey. But come, Mary, you are tired and must go to bed."

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO SISTERS.

WHILE this little conversation takes place in the kitchen, another is going on, three stories higher, in one of the best bedrooms, and we will take the liberty of stepping up there, and setting the clock of time a little back, that we may satisfy our curiosity by listening to that also. Two young girls, one of them scarcely escaped from childhood, and with that incomparably delicate bloom, its own peculiar possession, which sometimes lingers late, but once gone never returns, still upon her fair countenance, are dressing for a ball, or, rather, they have just completed their toilet. They are attired alike, in white crape over silk, save that the eldest and dark-haired maiden has bunches of pink roses and silver for trimming, and her fairer sister similar ones of blue. The former is taking a final glance at herself in a cheval-glass, the latter is kneeling on a chair, gazing at a print which she has just hung up on the wall.

"I looked at it," she said half to herself, "with more pleasure somehow in the morning."

"At what, Gertrude?" asked her sister, turning round.

"At our dear Lady. She seems gently to reproach me, and ask me why I am dressed out in this fashion. I don't know how to try and be like her now, for our Lady never, never wore a gay flaunty dress like mine."

"What nonsense you talk!" exclaimed her sister. "How *can* you know what our Lady wore? Dress varies with time and place. If you want to be like her, be good—that's common sense, say I—and dress like other people. Besides, if you think she dislikes gay dressing so much, why does our cousin Maria Elliot deck out her image in gauze and lace and flowers on her festival days? I am sure Maria is

good enough at any rate, and I have heard you admiring it yourself, though I must say I think it rather bad taste ; but that is neither here nor there."

" Our Lady has now all the ornaments of glory upon her, Emma," replied Gertrude ; " and so we attire her in what we ourselves consider to be ornamental dress as a symbol of this, and of our sympathy with her festival, which the court of Heaven is keeping in her honour ; but when she was on earth do you think she can have worn anything like gay clothing ? Can you imagine her decking her own person in gay and showy attire ?"

" Really, Gertrude, there is no arguing with you if you go off in this way ! However, it seems to me that you would prove that all festivity or tokens of rejoicing are sinful. But good Christians in all ages have honoured festive occasions by banquets, music, pageantry, and splendid attire."

" I know that very well, and should never think of dreaming it was wrong to do so ; there is a meaning in all that, and a good one ; but society keeps very few such festivals now. This is no festival or festive occasion to-night ; hardly any of the amusements we go to have that character. They are pure diversions, recreations, and we go dressed up like so many opera-dancers, that we may look to advantage ; and we enjoy these amusements ourselves, and our mothers enjoy them for us, just in proportion as we are noticed and admired : you must know that very well, Emma."

" If it comes to this, Gertrude, you ought to be a nun. If the world is not fit for you, you had better go into religion ; that is, if you can get Papa and Mama's leave."

" I don't see that, Emma. I do not know whether I have any vocation to be a nun ; but is there no alternative but living for the world and for amusement, content just to keep out of sin ?"

" How odd it is," said Emma, " that you always preach a little sermon of this sort just when you are dressing for a

ball. If you think all recreation so very wrong, why do you take it so readily after you have made your protest against it?"

"I don't think all recreation wrong, Emma."

"I hardly suppose you can," replied Emma, "for it is allowed even in convents; indeed it is prescribed; so you see, Gertrude, that the principle is admitted. Of course their recreations differ from ours; that is on account of the difference of state."

"But recreation must always have the same object, whatever it is, Emma,—to fit us better for God's service. Now, I must own, I do not find these amusements do fit me better. I have to shake off the whole atmosphere and impression of them before I regain any inward peace. However, I have tried them but a short time; maybe the novelty makes them affect me more."

"Very likely," said Emma, who had drawn near and was looking at the print, "I cannot say I feel any difference after a ball from what I do before, or anything to shake off. But where did you get that print? It is really very pretty."

"Tyrell gave it me, but I have had it framed."

"Tyrell! Gertrude," exclaimed her sister, her lip curling with disdain; "do you take presents from servants? I must say it was very impertinent of the cook to offer it; but I should have thought you would have been above taking anything from one in her condition."

"Tyrell is never impertinent," replied Gertrude, warmly, "and would not think of making me a present any more than I should of accepting one from a person who cannot afford it. I will tell you how it happened; you know Mama sends me often to order the dinner. One day, having forgotten to give some directions, I ran after Tyrell and followed her to her room, and there I saw this print, or rather its facsimile. I admired it, and she told me some good nun had given it her a great many years ago,

and two or three others besides, in case she liked to give any away, and I should please her much if I would accept one. I really do not think I could have refused her."

"Perhaps *you* could not; *I* do not think I could have brought myself to accept it. I would never take anything from an inferior, on principle. It goes against all my ideas."

"But Tyrell is so good; she is not like an inferior."

"I don't see her great superiority; she is a quiet sort of creature, and a very good woman in her way, I have no doubt."

"Oh, Emma, you don't know—I am sure nobody knows—how very good she is. It always does me good to speak to her, and, excepting her own business, she never says anything but about God or one's soul, or eternity; and what she says always comes home to me, however simple it may be; indeed it always *is* simple. The other day I complained that time was so short for everything I had to do in London, and she said, 'Time is very short everywhere for the one thing we have to do.' Now I kept saying that to myself over and over again that whole morning."

"Well, indeed, it is pretty free of her to treat you to her religious truisms."

"They may be truisms, but they always seem to be something fresh as she says them. On my birthday again, a few weeks ago, when I was seventeen, I said, 'Tyrell, you must wish me many happy returns of this day, for every one has been making good wishes for me this morning, and giving me presents; if I only knew a receipt for insuring happiness, that would be the best present of all.' I said this cunningly, for I knew I should get something good from her. I saw she scribbled on a little bit of paper, and then she handed it to me, and saying quietly 'That is the receipt, it is well known, but it is a secret too,' walked away. I unfolded it and found these two words: 'God alone.' I will keep it by me as long as I live."

"Well, if you choose to take the cook for your spiritual director," rejoined Emma, scornfully, "and encourage such familiarity in her, I can no longer wonder at the affair of the print. Does Mama know of all this? It would not be much to her taste, I think ; she never liked our talking to servants. But I fancy you have taken good care to keep it from her."

"Do *you* tell her everything, Emma?" asked Gertrude, who was beginning to be a little chafed at her elder sister's contemptuous manner.

Emma coloured a little, "No, not everything exactly, where no good could come of it. I was not blaming you for that. But, Gertrude," she resumed, with rather an abatement of tone, "I fear you have a chance of losing your humble monitor. Papa grumbles at Tyrell's cookery and talks of a change."

"Oh ! don't say so, Emma. But how is that? She has been with us several years, and I never heard any complaints."

"No, that is true, and he allows she is painstaking, and does what she attempts nicely enough, but then he says it's old-fashioned cookery ; in short, she is not up to the mark. He was at two dinners last week, one at Sir Philip Eagle's and the other at Mr. Abinger's, and he says it was quite another thing."

"But then think of the wages, Emma, which those two gentlemen give their cooks ; why, treble probably what poor Tyrell has ; and then the extravagance of the dinners themselves ! How would Mama like that?"

"That is very true, and so Mama is not disposed to part with her. That dear mammy of ours, as you know, is very discreet in the matter of stretching her purse-strings unnecessarily ; and then she keeps the household accounts, and Papa never looks at them, but only pays them in the lump. Tyrell is economical, and never forgets anything,

and Mama values these two qualities. I think probably she will have her own way. Papa expends his energies in giving his vote in the House, and having satisfied his dignity by influencing the councils of the nation and tired himself out a good deal besides, he comes home and finds Mama in all her force upon the household throne, able to bring her fresh powers, not weak ones in that line, to bear upon him ; and so she commonly carries the day, and he gracefully yields or outlives his ungratified wish. Tyrell will probably remain, unless by any chance she was to offend Mama, who in that case would not keep her a moment longer ; and, I promise you, if she was to treat our mother to any of her religious saws she would soon see the outside of the door."

"Tyrell is not the least likely to do that."

"No, she knows better, of course, whom she has to deal with. Even you would hardly venture upon being edifying except in private to me. Come," she added, putting her arm affectionately round Gertrude's waist and kissing her, "I think it is generally before a ball, as I told you, that you indulge in this fanciful strain ; but when I see later how you are enjoying yourself as much as any little mad-cap ever did, I cannot but suspect there *is* a good deal of imagination in the matter, and that the gaieties of the world, after all, do not come so amiss to my pretty sister."

There was some truth in this, and Gertrude, smiling a little sorrowfully, said, that perhaps she only liked them too well.

"There, I hear Roper talking to Mama, as she lights her to the drawing-room. The carriage will be here just now ; we had better go down and show we are ready."

CHAPTER III.

THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE.

A WORD or two must be said about the mistress of the house, who, in a handsome dress of crimson velvet trimmed with rich lace, and with a head-dress in keeping, hovering in character between hat, turban, and cap, is standing on the rug in the sitting-room, waiting for her daughters, and engaged in the operation of getting a tight-fitting pair of gloves on, with all due precaution against their bursting.

Mrs. Wyndham must have been extremely well-looking in her youth, and had still a striking appearance. She was like her elder daughter, and had perhaps been even handsomer, though less pretty; the character of the face being more strongly marked in both its good and bad points. These may be summed up as consisting in a pair of bright black eyes, whose lustre lacked softness; a well-pencilled, dark eyebrow, too evenly arched to indicate any high order of intelligence; a well-formed slightly aquiline nose; hair of a very glossy raven hue, which at candlelight at any rate betrayed no lines of grey, but which lacked softness in texture as the eye lacked it in expression; a good set of regular and rather large teeth; and a fine figure a little above the middle height. Mrs. Wyndham's extraction was very inferior to that of her husband; she was, in fact, the daughter of a retired tradesman in a county town of little importance. Her father belonged to that numerous class generically styled good sort of men, whose characteristics may be considered to be chiefly made up of negatives. To the negatives must be added that of not being a very fervent Catholic; but in his excuse it might be alleged that there was no Catholic chapel within many miles of the little town where he made his moderate fortune and spent

the bulk of his days. Few persons knew that he belonged to the ancient faith ; and it may be inferred that a man of his stamp was not likely to wish that knowledge extended, seeing that it would have been very far from an assistance in the ready sale of his cottons and silks. What made the matter worse was that it was difficult even in intimacy to detect the fact, or to observe any difference between him and the ordinary run of his Protestant neighbours. His wife, a bustling woman, attended a little more strictly to her religious duties, but she was ignorant, and her children's education suffered in consequence. They went to a Protestant day-school, and had not the advantage of any counter-influences at home. Mr. Sanders at last retired from business, removed from the neighbourhood, and, transformed into John Sanders, Esq., settled himself in a neat villa two miles from a large town in one of the midland counties, where, after having provided himself with furniture much too solid and handsome for his small house—a weakness not uncommon with men who have made their money in trade—bought a pony chaise, set up a tiger in buttons, laid out his garden prettily and filled it with a blaze of scarlet geraniums, he looked round complacently till the novelty was worn off furniture, tiger, and tom-thumbs, and ever after, according to the testimony of the friends who were best acquainted with him, scarcely knew what to do with himself.

A little annual variety and excitement enlivened the family circle every Christmas in the shape of a visit from an unmarried elder brother of Mr. John Sanders, who was considered an important personage among his relatives, and went by the name of the Nabob. Through the patronage of a gentleman who had taken a fancy to the boy, Bill Sanders had been sent very young to India, where, with the help of fair abilities and fortunately-concurring circumstances, he had realized a considerable sum of money and

returned to England to enjoy it as best he might, which in such cases is, generally speaking, very little. Besides, the poor man, if he had secured his earthly fortune, had made shipwreck of his heavenly. He had lost his faith, and conformed to Protestantism. This act, accomplished while he was still very young, and the gradual result rather of ignorance and indifference than of any formal resolution, had not, in his case, entailed the usual bitter hostility of the apostate to his abandoned faith. Still it was very generally believed that Mr. Sanders intended to make his nearest Protestant relative his heir, and, had not the young expectant imprudently expressed himself confidently on that head in the presence of some officious or malicious hearers, who reported his words, such would probably have been the disposition of the East Indian's will. As it was, that worthy resolved at any rate to use the privilege which the living possess of changing his mind, and astonished and gratified not a little the family at Comptonville by informing them by letter one fine December morning, when announcing, as customary, the approaching day of his annual visit, that he meant to make his niece, Beatrice Sanders, his heiress, on condition of his being allowed to adopt the child.

The little girl, who was frolicsome and forward, qualities which seem very commonly to recommend miniature women in men's eyes, had always been a special favourite with her uncle. His home was lonely, and he probably enjoyed the prospect of enlivening it by the presence of one whose affection might precede any interested motive, and who, when old enough to value the prospect of inheriting wealth, might at least have acquired sufficient of a daughter's tenderness to deter her from the desire of looking impatiently to the moment of possession. She was a Catholic; but what of that? He would see that she was not allowed to be "a bigot"; and for the rest, he was quite ready to guarantee to her family her education in the faith of her

parents. Those parents were only too willing to be satisfied with these guarantees, and to hand over one of their inconveniently numerous family, and a rather troublesome child, to the enjoyment of such splendid prospects. The transfer was accordingly made ; little Beatrice accompanied her uncle to London, and a French governess was engaged for her tuition. By-and-by, however, the uncle took a fatigue of the instructress's presence, whose language he did not understand, and it was voted by him—having no one to vote against him, not even, as may be supposed, the child herself—that a governess could be dispensed with, and her education as satisfactorily completed by the help of masters in the various accomplishments considered necessary for the young lady. A *bonne* to sit in the room, who vanished when her company was not wanted, was supposed to answer all other purposes sufficiently well.

When Beatrice was grown up, her uncle, who was both fond and proud of his adopted daughter, endeavoured to procure her every amusement in his power, and to introduce her to as good society as was within his reach. That society was, of course, not of the highest class, but a showy young lady, with good pecuniary prospects, and no appendages in the shape of dull, ugly, or vulgar relatives, at least none in sight, possesses many advantages for pushing her way. Miss Sanders knew how to use them when the opportunity offered : she had money, but wanted birth and connections ; Mr. Percy Wyndham had birth, but wanted money. Beauty and superficial agreeability were something over and above, which rendered Beatrice attractive in his eyes ; and so the match was soon concluded, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. The retired linendraper and his wife were by this time dead, and the rest of the family apparently provided for at a distance ; small mention was ever made of them. The Nabob had continued his yearly visits while his brother lived, and always took Beatrice with him to see her

parents. Since their death all intercourse had pretty well ceased ; the old gentleman grew ambitious for his niece, and the young girl did not care for relatives of whom she knew little, and whose inferior education she despised, while they on their part felt ill at their ease with her. The consequence was that she expressed no wish to see them, neither did they care to put themselves in the way ; her uncle accordingly availed himself of the mutual indifference, and never favoured any of them with an invitation to his town house, an invitation which, to do them justice, they neither sought nor desired.

Mr. Wyndham was a barrister, the younger son of a Catholic of good family, which, although it had not outlived its faith, had parted with its love and fervour. Such was the case, at least, with its head, who was supposed to be so slenderly attached to his religion as to hold to it rather from a point of honour than any other motive ; and it had been confidently asserted by many that he would lay it aside whenever the Catholic Emancipation Bill passed. In this expectation, however, his Protestant friends were disappointed. Mr. Wyndham remained a nominal Catholic, and educated his children in the old faith. It may be imagined, however, how deficient was the training which his sons especially received. Mr. Percy Wyndham was considered a talented young man ; he studied for the law, but he wanted for application ; besides, he did not like his profession, and the whole desire of his heart was for public life. Through the influence of friends much mixed up in politics, he was finally pushed forward in this line, gave up the law, and obtained a seat in Parliament.

Mrs. Wyndham knew well how to grace her new situation. She was reckoned handsome and agreeable, and her husband was proud of her. Beatrice was not altogether heartless, though the range of her affections was very limited, but she wanted for sweetness, kindliness, and generosity of

heart. Her love was selfish and common-place, and did not overflow her near domestic circle. She loved her uncle while he lived, because he had been kind to her, and made her comfortable and happy ; she loved her husband, because he was her husband, and kind also, and esteemed her somehow much above her deserts ; but chiefly she loved her children, as the nearest approach to part of herself. But did she love the poor ? I fear it must be owned, on the contrary, that in her heart she disliked them. Dirt and rags look unseemly, and do not smell sweet, and Mrs. Wyndham's senses were acute ; she accordingly loathed the sight and near approach of them. She would have shrunk, however, from confessing, even to herself, that she actually loathed Christ's poor. Oh, no ! she only loathed these accessories ; but unfortunately it was in their accessories that she alone habitually contemplated them. And what of servants ? They are commonly clean, at least, so may be said to make to our hearts the touching appeal of poverty, without its accompanying unpleasing accidents. Besides, these dear children of a common Lord live under our roof, and eat of our bread, and share our fears and hopes and interests, and minister to our wants. But, no ; Mrs. Wyndham did not love servants either. True, they did not disgust her like the poor, and she valued good ones for solid reasons. But Mrs. Wyndham, although she possessed a lady-like exterior and manner, had a certain vulgar pride in her heart of hearts. She instinctively remembered that she had been raised from an inferior grade, and her whole education had tended to foster that most repulsive of all prides—the pride which springs from acquired station. The pride of birth and hereditary honours, whatever may be the faults it produces, seldom leads to contempt of a class so far removed in the social scale ; but if neither natural good-feeling nor Christian charity combine, as undoubtedly they often do, to counteract or check the tendency, the *parvenu* is disposed

to display his superiority in the eyes of the humbler classes, and to keep inferiors at a distance, from a false notion of thereby vindicating and maintaining his own position. Hence Mrs. Wyndham's ideas of what was vulgar and of what was a "demeaning of oneself," were really, for all her superficial polish, intensely vulgar. Servants knew and felt this; they have often a very fine tact and keen observation; forced to be silent, they see and know their superiors more fully than these are apt to imagine; and if, from love, they often judge their employers most partially, so, from lack of love, they often judge them most severely, and none so severely as those whose original situation was more approximated to their own.

Mrs. Wyndham was, accordingly, not loved by her servants, neither, to say the truth, did she much deserve to have their love. For the credit of her house she fed them well, and, to win a certain amount of popularity, to which she was far from indifferent, she treated them to some occasional recreation; but she was hard in little matters, and overlooked their feelings. Her pride, indeed, was offended at any demonstration of sensitiveness, touchiness, or other human foible on their part, as if, forsooth, perfection could be purchased as services may; a pride usually expressing itself in some such form as the following: "I have *no idea* of a servant doing or saying such a thing," or "It is an impertinence," or "a thing,"—a generic term which could be universally applied where it was difficult to specify the crime—"which *I make a rule* never to put up with."

Upon her children, as has been observed, this unamiable woman lavished her small and shallow stock of kindness. It was her longing desire to be loved by them in return, and this in a particular way. Mrs. Wyndham, in short, desired a sisterly and brotherly rather than a filial love from her children. To gain this, all her efforts had been

directed. She, so proud with inferiors, had encouraged a very great degree of familiarity on the part of her son and daughters. She was greedy of their whole confidence, but she went the wrong way to obtain it. It is difficult for a parent, whom Providence has placed in the position of a superior, to win the species of confidential and free communication of all that the heart contains of good, bad, and indifferent which is frankly accorded to an equal. The mother may be, and ought to be, the child's best friend and adviser, but when childhood is passed she will seldom continue to be its confidant. If a young person has been so defectively brought up as to require the consolation of such a depository of her little secrets, she will seek one in her sister or her friend, unasked and unsought, not in her mother, although this parent may lovingly and profusely lay herself out to secure the coveted boon. She loses the mother's prerogative to obtain the sister's, and fails of both. Perhaps she deplores the last of these two failures the most; she is too shortsighted to see how much higher and deeper and more precious is the confidence of a child than the confidentialness—if one may say so—of the companion.

But Mrs. Wyndham was quite a stranger to views either deep or high. Perhaps the sister's love was more attractive in her eyes than the filial, because it seemed to prolong her own youth. The present generation certainly—the poor always excepted—do not, taken collectively, become gracefully old; partly because they feel that age is out of favour. The whole current sets in an opposite direction. Children are brought forward early, the old kept back from going on to age's dignity and assimilated to the young. Hence this nineteenth century of ours encourages much freedom on the part of young people. Of course due allowance must be made for altered customs, and it is not desirable, were it possible, to recall the times when a child treated his parents with a formal respect ill-suited to our

present social state and feelings. Still the principle which lay at the root of this behaviour was a good and a sound one, and it is to be feared that it is now often but little realized, and not merely expressed in forms more appropriate to our day.

A fresh idea, as it were, is afloat with regard to the relations between old and young, parents and children, and the result is hardly satisfactory. A dyke is broken down, a fence removed ; those who are ordinarily treated as familiar companions and equals will naturally learn to exercise the free privileges of companions and equals. Hence much of that mutual dissatisfaction which so often arises between mothers and daughters ; and if the reverence of sons less frequently suffers from this mistaken system, it is because there is in the nature of things such a fund of tenderness and sacredness in the love of the son for his mother that it is less easy to mar it ; for with the filial affection in his case is blended the tender respect of man for woman. Besides, the mother is apt on her part to treat her sons with something of the corresponding deference and respect of woman for man, and so to have a thousand little nice considerations for his feelings which she will disregard in the case of her daughters. Whatever faults her behaviour may serve to nurture in her sons,—and they are not a few,—it will at least often, though not always, preclude those collisions of temper which, in the end, permanently break down the barriers of respect.

The mother, however, after all, cannot forget that she is a mother, and if she desires to act the sister, it is rather besides than instead ; and so it was with Mrs. Wyndham. The consequence was, that, when displeased, she would endeavour to re-assume the maternal character ; thus placing herself in an attitude which was a positive grievance to those who were not used to it. But after this assumption of authority, how could she resume the position of a sister ?

The spell was broken. Gertrude's question to her sister, "Do *you* tell her everything?" although it had with her no special object, was in fact a home-thrust. Emma did *not* tell her mother everything. She was chatty and gossipy with her, but the secrets of her heart she kept from her. Not prepared to abide by her advice as her mother, she disliked the prospect of her interference as a superior; she kept from her, therefore, any knowledge which might be used against herself. Mrs. Wyndham knew whom Emma flirted with—and she did not object to her flirting a little—but she did not know whom Emma liked. Perhaps a certain Captain Baines, of rather slashy appearance and a very ready tongue, might not have received such frequent invitations to dinner, if the mother had suspected that the daughter regarded him as anything more than one among many superficial admirers. Emma knew that if her parents had suspected a growing partiality on her part, this individual would have been very quietly sent to the right-about by the negative measure of non-invitation and the positive assistance, if need were, of a cold shoulder. But as the young lady did not feel convinced that she might not after all be very willing to link her destinies to those of this agreeable individual, she wished to give herself a chance; when once matters had arrived at any serious point, she trusted to the indulgence of her parents and her own entreaties for obtaining their consent.

And if Emma had her concealments, so had Gertrude, though hers were far more legitimate. She concealed the pious feelings which she cherished in her own bosom amidst the unfriendly and chilling atmosphere around her; their expression would, she knew, elicit something like cold contempt, which, however provoking from a sister, would be unendurable from a mother. Besides, she instinctively dreaded interference with the few little devout practices and purchases in which she quietly indulged. Her mother

would take the alarm, and believe that she was likely to become a nun; her father perhaps would be spoken to, who would regard such a prospect, if possible, with still more profound distaste than his wife. Hence she anticipated nothing but vexation from allowing either of her parents to suspect the real state of her mind. But much evil was the necessary result of the dissimulation which she was constrained to practise. First and foremost, as the root of all the rest, she was without the direction which she so much needed. Mrs. Wyndham had not the smallest idea of her daughters needing anything more in the spiritual way than she considered sufficient for herself. She performed her Easter duties—it was a question among his friends if Mr. Wyndham did so much. To this she added confession and communion at Christmas, and generally also at some one of the other greater festivals. On these occasions she was accompanied by her daughters. Emma was quite satisfied with this arrangement, and Gertrude, only just seventeen, had not the courage to express a wish which she was sure her mother would regard as a censure of herself. Meanwhile she mixed in a round of amusements which a secret voice within her seemed to denounce as inconsistent, if it were but from their bewildering frequency, with a true Christian life. Nevertheless, when she found herself in the gay ball-room, the excitement of the scene led her on each successive occasion to take a giddy share in the night's entertainment; and she returned home to condemn herself for having committed an act of infidelity to God's inspirations. She often blamed herself where she was not to blame, and did not see where her fault really lay. Besides, though from caution and timidity she dissembled with her mother, Gertrude was by nature communicative, far too communicative. Unlike him who, having found the pearl of great price, hid it, she was fond of producing hers in season and out of season, not from the love of display but

from a tendency to that disease of the mind which will not allow it to retain anything long in its undivided possession. The perfume evaporates when the cork is drawn ; the disinterred seed cannot fructify ; and thus good impressions, having found their satisfying act in words not deeds, are apt to remain barren of results. An intelligent director would have told her to hold her tongue, as the first condition of any real progress. The necessity never occurred to the poor child ; it seemed pious to her to talk of her pious thoughts ; we have seen her obtruding them on her sister, a most unprofitable hearer and recipient of religious communications, and one on whom they produced, moreover, an injurious effect ; for, seeing nothing to correspond with these desires and aspirations in the conduct of her younger sister when in company, Emma was naturally led to look upon them as unreal and fanciful, and to regard piety itself as a mere matter of taste.

And so Mrs. Wyndham lived a stranger to her daughters' inmost feelings. Lavishing upon them all her confidence, concealing from them nothing, taking them into little secrets which she withheld even from their father, doing nothing without at least consulting them, making everything bend to their amusement, throwing herself back into their age, finding fault with nothing but what she feared might prove a worldly disadvantage to them, and, if tiresome occasionally, tiresome for their vain interests rather than her own, she received no real payment in return for all this expenditure. Familiar on the surface, they were, in truth, reserved with her. The positions were reversed ; the child had all the mother's confidence, the mother only a discreet portion of the child's. The case is perhaps not uncommon.

CHAPTER IV.

GOING OUT.

WHAT an expressive word! How things seem naturally to embody themselves to the ear in appropriate names. Going out! And what is it, this going out? It is what young ladies are brought up for, and what they are not brought up for. It is what they are trained to desire, but snubbed if they betray that desire before the time. It is a course upon which, when once launched, they are urged forward in the inverse ratio of previous restraint, and where they must unlearn as awkwardness, much which before they had been taught as propriety and decorum. The contradiction might be drawn out at more length; it exists even in the case of the worldly—how much more in the case of those who profess not to live for this world, but to be at warfare with it! The whole education of the soul for that kingdom of glory to which it is travelling through its mortal life of probation, has for one of its chief objects to teach that soul to retire within, there to watch itself by recollection and fix its eye on God, for whom it was made, by the continual consciousness of His presence. To go out of itself is to expose itself to forgetfulness, to temptation, to sin. The less recollection the less holiness—this may be confidently asserted.

Recollection, of course, may be preserved in the midst of a crowd, in the turmoil of business and all the distractions of a circle of pleasure-seekers, but by those alone who have already acquired the habit and who are of necessity exposed to such trials. A girl of seventeen can hardly be expected to be, ordinarily speaking, so perfectly grounded in the practice, and as she is taken into the world ostensibly to amuse herself, not to exercise her virtue by resisting the fascinations of the scene, she is scarcely likely to fulfil the second

condition of being present of necessity, rather than by inclination. To call the systematic round of gaiety into which young persons are launched at the appointed age, by the mild name of recreation, would I suppose be an affront to the common sense of any one ; the worldly have themselves discarded the inappropriate appellation, and laughingly call it dissipation. If all-powerful habit and human respect did not here exercise their mighty power, can we conceive a Catholic mother for seventeen years teaching her child what she deliberately takes her, when that period is over, to the school of the world to unlearn ? She has taught her to cultivate an inward spirit, she takes her where perforce she will be dragged out of herself, and go forth from the sanctuary of her own heart, where she so timidly and lovingly clung to her Lord's hand and looked up in His face to consult His guiding eye. She has taught her, amidst the variety of the day's occupations or recreations, to have one dominant thought and intention, knitting them all up into one act of homage and love ; she takes her where every temptation is held out to dissipation of mind, and where it must be hard, to say the least of it, to make an appropriate offering to God of either the time so spent, the motive of its being thus spent, or the spirit in which it is actually spent. Her child must here unlearn the bashfulness with which her own modest nature and the dictates of divine grace taught her to shrink even from notice, far more from admiration and praise. She *must* unlearn it or the gay lighted ball-room, filled with observing eyes, and her own attire, however modest, still arranged with the confessed object of making her appear to the best advantage, must prove a penance not a pleasure ; and such is the case with many a shy young girl at first ; but this wears off, and what next ? When she ceases to be pained at exhibition, will she continue to be as great a lover of concealment ?

Mrs. Wyndham, however, though a Catholic, had never

endeavoured to cultivate in her daughters any character of mind which would have given rise to a contrast such as here described. She had always lived outside herself, and the hidden virtues were all unknown to her. Emma trod in her steps, and Gertrude's misgivings had certainly not their source in the lessons of her mother. Both sisters, however, had not been long in the ball-room before they seemed to be prepared to enjoy themselves equally well. The spacious apartment was bright with the mimic day which a blaze of wax-candles produces ; it was not full enough as yet for the atmosphere to be close ; you could see and be seen. Dresses were fresh and uncrumpled, and faces did not yet wear a look of excited fatigue ; the bouquets of the young girls were unfaded and exhaled their choice perfume ; no one had begun to look disappointed or out of humour, for it might prove a pleasant evening to every one ; all, in short, was expectation and hope, like the beginning of life.

The eyes of both Mrs. Wyndham and Emma continually sought the door as guest after guest was ushered in, and a smile of satisfaction passed over the face of each at the same instant. Two young men had entered ; the one advanced instantly to join their party, the other apparently had the same destination, though he made his way in their direction less ostensibly, and occasionally stopped to exchange a word with some acquaintance on his road. The first was Algernon Wyndham, the only son, his mother's darling. He was extremely handsome, with the dark hair and eyes of his sister Emma, but with much more sweetness of expression ; he had, in truth, a very engaging countenance and manner ; nor did these belie the reality as far as good temper and easiness of disposition were concerned. He was accordingly a great favourite with his sisters and friends, and knew well how to make himself liked wherever he went. He had a cordial obliging manner, a winning smile, and withal a superficial

good-nature, which captivated the hearts of young and old alike. But Algernon Wyndham was nevertheless deficient in principle ; there was no solid worth beneath this agreeable exterior. He was a nominal Catholic, if never having declared himself a Protestant left him a title to the appellation, but in fact he had little or no definite religious belief. Shallow, though accomplished on the surface, the faith of his earlier years, which nothing in his education had tended to foster or strengthen, had received incalculable detriment from the plausible sceptical objections which he had heard from the lips of bad friends. Yet, though his faith, if not altogether dead, had been shaken and undermined, he had a certain good taste and feeling—it could hardly be called more—which made him refrain personally from anything like profane language, at least in presence of those whom it might possibly wound ; and again, the very shallowness of his disposition helped to keep him back from a bold assertion of unbelief. Without reverence for anything holy, he was also without animosity against it ; and piety even received at his hands the civil forbearance which he was ready to exercise towards all ; and so good people themselves were strangely mistaken in him, and disposed to think very leniently of so seemingly lovable a young man. It may be imagined, then, that his mother and sisters had never fathomed nor so much as suspected his intrinsic worthlessness, though they were aware that he had his faults. With the exception of some chance observation which they did not scrutinize too closely, or the scope of which they did not apprehend, he had given no utterance in their presence to infidel views and opinions, and, as he did not live under the same roof with them, they could hardly tell what might be the amount of his observance or non-observance of his religious duties. Besides, Algernon was fond of music, and went occasionally to High Mass on that account, at the chapel which the Opera-singers frequented. He had in

the first instance tried the diplomatic career, but, as he indulged in a good deal of extravagance and idled away his time as an *attaché*, his father recalled him and made interest to obtain him an employment in one of the government offices, where he spent some hours every day, doing as little work as he could help, but greatly lightening the dulness of the time to some idle companions like himself by his gay and frank sociability.

The gentleman who entered the room with him was his friend and intimate, Captain Baines, whom he had lately introduced to his mother and sisters. He had certainly no better principles than Algernon, but on this subject I need say no more at present; neither was he by any means as amiable. Mrs. Wyndham, however, found him a very convenient and enlivening addition to her frequent dinner parties. When making out the list to be invited, there would often occur a vacancy, or an expected guest would send an excuse, perhaps late in the day, and then Mrs. Wyndham would consult with her elder daughter, as to who should be asked. It must be some one to suit the rest, for the lady piqued herself on giving agreeable and well-assorted parties; then Emma would cunningly suggest persons who she knew would not be considered as likely to answer the purpose; or again, after mentioning others who might have been accepted, she would quietly drop out some objection, and thus gradually lead her mother round to think of Captain Baines, who somehow got on very well with everybody. The proposal always came from Mrs. Wyndham, who was not the least aware that she had not made a free choice.

Emma is soon whirling round in a waltz with her favoured admirer, and Gertrude has not had to wait long for a partner. Mrs. Wyndham is not giving either of them a thought, but has been carried off by Algernon to introduce him to some desirable acquaintance. She is never so happy or so proud as when she walks about arm in arm with her

son ; she is proud of him ; and her own personal vanity is not a little gratified when it sometimes reaches her ears that they look more like brother and sister than mother and son.

I have no intention of describing the ball, which was much like most other balls, nor Emma's flirtation, which was very like all others of the same description. As the hours rolled on, the indefatigable young lady, who had that excellent health which is often possessed by persons whose brains and feelings suffer very little wear and tear, looked as fresh as ever, and perhaps rather more brilliant, but the rose had faded from her more delicate sister's cheek. She had just declined dancing and complained of the heat of the room. Upon attempting to move, she gave signs of an inclination to faint, and her mother sent Algernon to call the carriage. But Emma was engaged three deep, and was much more distressed at having her amusement cut short than alarmed by her sister's indisposition. Her mother observed her ill-humour, but was bent on taking Gertrude home. She was glad, however, on Algernon's return with the information that the carriage had got up to the door, to effect a compromise by leaving Emma under her brother's care, that young gentleman readily promising to see her safe home.

The pure blue daylight was pouring into the ball-room, dimming the candlelight, turning its artificial splendour into tinsel and robbing many a sham of its lustre, including not a few complexions ; the party was fast melting away, and it was more than time for Emma to go home ; but she did not like to hurry her brother, and, truth to say, was in no hurry herself. When at length she suggested the expediency of a move, Algernon suddenly remembered that it was very inconvenient for him to bestow the benefit of his escort. Kensington, where the ball was given, was a long way from the paternal mansion, and equally far from the young man's lodgings, which were, indeed, near at hand.

He had forgotten till this moment, but he had an invitation to breakfast that morning which he could not miss. If he took Emma home, it would make an hour's difference, or more, in the very short repose he could afford himself; however, he was quite at her disposal, if she wished it; but, if he were to see her into a cab, would she mind going home by herself? There could be no possible risk, and it seemed absurd for him to make that long journey for no purpose. Emma had some inward misgivings, but disliked disobliging her brother. It is more popular and pleasant to say "yes" on such occasions; besides, the young lady had an absurd dread of seeming over-particular. No, she had not the least objection to the arrangement, she said; and so, after some trouble, a cab was procured. Algernon gave his directions to the driver, who grunted his assent, looked in once more at his sister, and, with his own good-humoured smile, saying, "I suppose, Em, it may be as well to mention nothing of this to the old birds—good night," he banged the door, and the cab forthwith rattled off.

But Emma did *not* particularly like the arrangement; she had never been in a cab by herself, and she disliked, moreover, the idea of having to tell a lie, or evade the truth, with the fear of its coming out after all in some way or other. The servants at her father's door, too, would see she was alone; Algernon had not thought of that. So completely was she pre-occupied as she passed along Knightsbridge that she hardly noticed at first that the vehicle went very oddly. Whether it were the fault of horse or driver, so it was, that they seemed to proceed by a succession of jerks, and now and then describe unpleasant curves upon the road. As they had it pretty well to themselves at present, it did not so much matter; but this would be unpleasant if it continued in the narrower streets. Emma had a mind to put her head out and remonstrate, but the air was chilly, and she drew back, partly on that

account and partly because at that moment a few foot-passengers were in view, and she disliked exposing her head with its wreath of pink roses, and being seen in the act of screaming observations to a cabman, for the dawn was now far advanced. By-and-by they reached Hyde Park Corner, and the cabman, instead of proceeding along Piccadilly, turned up Park Lane. Emma thought he was going the wrong way, but stay—he takes a turn up to the right at last ; she thinks it is up Chapel Street ; but now again he turns to the left, up South Audley Street—where is he going ? and the horse bolts on and stops, and the cab jolts worse than ever : she must speak. Accordingly she puts her head out through the window and cries, “ This is not the right way to Berkeley Square.” The cabman answers in no very articulate voice, but she thinks she catches something about stones, which leads her to conclude that he is obliged to make this circuit on account of the mending of the road ; and so she resigns herself and leans back once more. They are now rattling along at a rapid pace ; another cab is coming from the opposite direction ; there is ample room to pass, but, just as they meet, her own conveyance describes one of its eccentric curves, and the wheels of the two cabs become locked together.

Poor Emma was thrown on to the opposite seat, and, as she was recovering herself, her ears were greeted by a storm of abusive epithets, and an equally angry volley in reply, exchanged between the two drivers. The disagreeable fact flashed upon her that her own conductor at least was drunk. Hardly had the idea crossed her mind before she heard a sharp cut of a whip, directed by the incensed cabman against his compeer. The man leaned on one side to escape it, and, the startled horse at the same moment making a sudden plunge forward, the box was as suddenly vacated by its top-heavy occupant. The affrighted animal, no longer feeling the restraint of the reins, now galloped

off furiously, while the poor girl, clasping her hands, sank back on her seat in an agony of terror. The catastrophe, as may be supposed, was not long delayed. The horse rushed on into Grosvenor Square, then, taking fright at a cart, turned sharp down Upper Grosvenor Street. It had not gone far before the wheel caught on a lamp-post, and the cab was upset. Emma's head struck violently against the side, and immediately losing all consciousness, was extricated from the vehicle by a policeman, amidst the compassionate ejaculations and eager questions of a group of persons of motley description, whom an accident does not fail to collect in a minute, as if by magic, at all hours.

"Poor young lady! Is she dead? Dear me! look at her smart gown, and all by herself too."

There was nothing to indicate either the name or the place of abode of this elegantly-dressed young person. The tiny pocket in the satin petticoat contained neither card nor address, and an embroidered pocket-handkerchief with the initials E. W., did not furnish much available information. A cab, which one of the bystanders had procured from a neighbouring stand, now rattled up full speed, and there appeared to be nothing to be done but to convey the apparently lifeless form, along with that of the unhappy cabman picked up in a still worse condition, and quite insensible, to the nearest station-house, in the next street. The noise had meanwhile, it would seem, attracted the attention of a wakeful ear in a substantial house near which the accident had occurred. A window on the second floor had been gently raised, and, although the church clock had not long struck five, she whose hand had lifted the sash could not have risen from her bed for the purpose, for scarcely a minute elapsed before the hall-door was unlocked and a tall figure, dressed in black, with a shawl thrown over her head, emerged and descended the steps. Bending over the young girl and raising her in her arms, she spoke in a

gentle under-tone to the policeman. The import of her address was soon evident ; she had undertaken the care of the sufferer, while the policeman, in pursuance of his duty, should proceed with the cabman to the station-house, and endeavour to obtain all necessary information from the man, as soon he was sufficiently revived to convey it. Meanwhile no time was lost in carrying Emma into the friendly house which had so opportunely opened to receive her. The door was then closed, and the street soon relapsed into its former silence.



CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER HOUSE ALTOGETHER.

WHEN Emma came to herself and opened her languid eyes, they rested upon what appeared to her to be sweeping white clouds, from a rent in which a cherub looked forth, or what might have been one of those youthful cherubic countenances, sweet little winged heads, which are represented as peering down from the sky, only that the face of the creature which was gazing at her was not furnished with heavenly plumes. Emma recollected nothing, and thought, perchance, she was dreaming. Is it her guardian angel ? No, it looks too human. It has a pretty, innocent, inquiring countenance, and see ! it winks its eyes and stoops forward. Oh, no, it is not an angel ; it is a child, or a young girl. And now it speaks softly, as its little caressing rosebud of a face comes nearly in contact with her own, as if it would kiss her if it could venture.

“ I am so glad,” it whispers, “ you are better ; but do tell us who you are. Mama wants so much to know.”

"Am I ill?" said Emma; "but who are you? you are a dear little thing, but I never saw you before."

The rosebud, thus encouraged, ventured on the kiss. The curtain which had represented the white cloud was now drawn partially aside by another hand, and a fair young girl older than the first, with a sisterly resemblance but a sedate countenance, whispered, "Pauline, you must not disturb her now; see, it is too much for her;" for Emma, in fact, had turned very faint and was near losing her consciousness once more.

At this moment the door was heard gently to open, and a little suppressed talking ensued, followed by the appearance, this time, of the very ordinary and matter-of-fact countenance of a grave-featured gentleman which there was no chance, at any rate, of confounding with the angelic.

"Who are you now?" thought Emma; but the effort of thinking seemed too great and that of speech still greater, so she held her peace and watched her visitor. He calmly regarded her, and then, after that pause which, doubtless for some good reason, medical men always interpose between their appearance on the scene and the feeling of the patient's pulse, he gently took her hand.

Emma knew at once that he was the doctor. "Where is Mama?" she asked.

"My dear young lady, that is what we wish to know. Where does she live? Will it tire you too much to try and remember?"

"She lives here, does she not?" asked the poor girl, looking rather bewildered; "is not this Berkeley Square?"

The doctor was satisfied; he was too wise to worry his patient further, so he nodded to some invisible person behind him, and after giving Emma a few drops of some composing mixture, closed the curtain. Within a very short time Emma's friends had been relieved from the agonizing anxiety in which they had spent the last few hours.

While the sick girl is recovering from the first stage of a slight concussion of the brain, and is advancing to a state in which she remains an object of great care, after ceasing to be one of considerable anxiety, we must take a glance at the members of the family of which she had become the chance inmate. Madame d'Héricourt, the mistress of the house, was the widow of the Marquis d'Héricourt, a French officer of distinction. Her own mother tongue, however, was English, she being the daughter of a West Indian planter, of Flemish extraction, of the name of Rytell, settled in Jamaica, and married to an Englishwoman. He had sent his two daughters to finish their education in a French convent, and while they were still pupils in this religious house, but had just completed their education, a reverse of fortune suddenly befell their father, which was followed by his speedy death. Their mother had already preceded him to the grave. The two orphans were left utterly destitute ; but the marriage of the elder, Pauline, soon relieved her from the necessity of earning her livelihood by her own exertions. M. de Sablon, a French officer of much merit, struck by the eminent Christian virtues which adorned the soul of the portionless girl, made her an offer of his hand. M. de Sablon was considerably her senior, but Pauline felt for him both respect and gratitude, and believed she was securing her earthly happiness and forwarding her eternal prospects by becoming the wife of so exemplary a man. It was a marriage founded on esteem and recommended by prudential considerations ; but God had blessed it, and, after giving to their friends and their own immediate family for some years the edifying spectacle of a truly Christian marriage, the husband and wife were separated to await a happier reunion. Emile de Sablon, who, from the death of a distant relative, had inherited the lands and Marquisate of Héricourt, died as he had lived, and left an example of benediction to his children, none the less truly and fondly

regretted by his wife that their union had been formed under what would be termed unromantic circumstances.

The second of the orphans, Anne, who had been earnestly pressed by her sister and brother-in-law, on their marriage, to accept a home under their roof, steadfastly declined the offer, and some time after had mysteriously disappeared. Glad, indeed, would the desolate widow have been to have had the soothing consolation of her sister's society, as well as her kind assistance in the education of her own two little girls, the elder of whom had received the name of that dear and lost companion of her youth. Leaning, however, on God, she strove to rear them in His fear and love, and according to the maxims which had taken deep root in her own quiet soul. Madame d'Héricourt had what many persons would call rather old-fashioned notions, and could not by any means throw herself into modern ideas concerning education, the relations between parents and children, or the part which women are called upon to play in the business of life. Not but that she freely confessed that different times had their special social manners and customs, which drew their reason of existence from living circumstances; and that to transplant these bodily to a period when such circumstances no longer exist would be a very unreal, unprofitable, and even mischievous proceeding, a mere slavish imitation of externals, always inappropriate, often ridiculous, and decidedly savouring of affectation. Still she believed that there were certain old principles, as old as Christianity itself, which were more deeply realized and more fully carried out in past times by good people than they are at present, and that the manners and customs then prevailing lent themselves more readily to such a realization and practical application than does the modern constitution of society.

Her ideas on these subjects might be summed up under three general principles, which were profoundly rooted in

her mind. The first was the principle of parental authority, not to be separated from, but involving, parental responsibility. She held that no usages of society or modern practice could alter the essential relationship between parents and children. The familiarity subsisting between them could never be that of equals. Children, nay, grown children—for young persons are but grown-up children—ought never to be released from the duty of respect and obedience, on the plea that the same practical results may be obtained from the spontaneous love and tender gratitude of the child's heart; a fallacy, moreover, which experience daily disproves.

The second principle regarded the proper sphere of woman. This she believed to be home, and the duties and charges which the care of the family involves: the ordering of her household, the education of her children, and those thousand little minute considerations inattention to which renders home uncomfortable and, what is worse, unprofitable to its inmates, whether it be the cottage of the poor or the mansion of the rich, and from personal superintendence of which neither wealth nor position can dispense. She thought that under the specious pretence of training up women to be agreeable and intellectual companions, instead of dull housekeepers and nurses, they were educated upon a plan which altogether lost sight of, and made *them* lose sight of, their proper vocation. Even good and religious people, she considered, gave in to this error of the day. Girls are brought up in an ignorance of household matters which would have made our grandmothers open their eyes in amazement; and as much time is devoted to accomplishments as if they were to make their bread upon the stage or in the concert-room. The intellect, meanwhile, receives that species of cultivation which the acquirement and the act of acquiring a stock of miscellaneous and superficial information impart. It is sharpened, not trained. But, above all, the powers of conversation are encouraged and

drawn out, bashfulness being esteemed a defect which has to be corrected. To be "a very pleasant girl with a great deal to say for herself," is higher praise even than that of a good musician or an accomplished singer. It is what "gets a girl on in the world" and makes her popular. There may be nothing, it is true, to prevent the "pleasant girl" from proving an agreeable partner in life when she marries, as marry she probably may; but it is hard to conceive, or at least Madame d'Héricourt found it hard to conceive, how out of such materials the Christian matron was to be developed. She might, indeed, be amiable and affectionate, and even pious and religious in her way, but the whole tenour of her daily existence would, it is to be feared, fail to teach that silent lesson which the lives of Catholic matrons in old times, not to say in other countries at the present day, so often and so admirably taught, and still teach, where the type is cherished. Nay, she considered that the very idea of the matron is too often obliterated in the modern Englishwoman's mind. The word, it is true, may be used at times, but only to signify a certain period of life; its beautiful characteristics are well-nigh forgotten, or have become matter of history.

The "matron," then, as Madame d'Héricourt pictured the character to herself, and as exemplified in the olden time, might be a less brilliant and agreeable companion than the modern wife; she had probably much less to say for herself; perhaps she could not talk politics, or give her opinion upon a number of general subjects and questions of the day; perhaps she had none to give; her time was chiefly taken up in the superintendence of her household and the nurture and instruction of her children. She cared personally for the well-being of her servants, both in body and soul; she taught the ignorant; she rose early to give the first of the day to God; her hands were busy with needlework and skilled in the art; she reached them forth also liberally to

the poor ; and when you saw her cross the threshold of her door and draw her modest veil about her, it was not to make a round of profitless calls, but to visit her Lord in the Tabernacle, or in the persons of the sick and the sorrowing, in the hovel, the hospital, or the prison. Such women once abounded, and their character was at least the type before the eyes of the well-disposed which in its severer lineaments it has now ceased to be. Such women were a real blessing to their husbands ; not because they smoothed the path of life and made them forget their cares, but because their virtuous example won them to God, if sinners, and drew them on in the path of holiness, if good men themselves. " Her children rose up and called her blessed ; her husband also, and he praised her,"—praised her, not for what the world praises, but for those things which have praise of God. Such a woman, supposing her even to be deficient in literary knowledge and accomplishments, was a far greater blessing to her husband than the most elaborately educated and mentally endowed wife can be, who has really never been taught, and cannot therefore practise, the duties of her state ; nay, who has not been taught what they are, and therefore does not even perceive her deficiencies. But, after all, good sense and judgment, a cheerful and obliging temper, combined with such a solid and sensible education as is perfectly compatible with thorough instruction in household matters, will make a woman a sufficiently intellectual companion for any man.

The third principle in Madame d'Héricourt's old-fashioned code respected the marriage of children ; this, and especially in the case of daughters, she reckoned among the responsibilities of parents. It was the duty of parents, when there was no sign of a vocation for a religious life, to provide, so far as in them lay, for the establishment of their daughters by a suitable marriage. This duty may be, and doubtless has been, abused ; but what duty has not ? It has been

abused in two ways. Where parents have enjoyed the power and prescriptive right of selection, they have, from overrating worldly advantages, not been sufficiently solicitous to secure the proper moral and religious qualifications in their daughters' husbands, or have overlooked the feelings, preferences, nay, even the disinclination of their children. Where, on the other hand, it has been the custom to consider that the parent has but a negative voice in the matter, —a belief against which the parent's convictions will always instinctively rebel,—the same avaricious spirit has produced in some the vice of match-making, a mere perversion of a real obligation, and in others an unreasonable opposition to an attachment which the freedom and unrestrained intercourse of society have allowed to spring up, and against which no sufficient objection can be urged when once it has been formed. Madame d'Héricourt clearly perceived that the matter involved a very difficult and delicate problem. On the Continent it is solved by committing the affair wholly, or almost wholly, to the parents, leaving the daughters the mere negative power of a veto, a right for various reasons not often exercised. She saw the advantages and the corresponding disadvantages of this plan. We English are keenly alive to its bad results, but we are blind, on the other hand, to the mischiefs of our own system, which is, generally speaking, to allow young persons such freedom of intercourse as shall give them the opportunity of forming their own preferences and making their own choice, subject to the interference and opposition of the parent at any stage of the business. How often this interference and opposition has begun to be exercised only when it was no longer possible to make it effectual to prevent a most undesirable alliance, or, if successful, has inflicted on a young heart such misery as it might have been easily spared, the secret annals of thousands of families and thousands of hearts could alone disclose.

Madame d'Héricourt endeavoured to steer a course midway between the extremes of the two systems, with the view of combining the advantages of each and avoiding the evils of either. With this view, without letting her authority appear in the form of restriction, she virtually chose the society which she allowed her daughters to enjoy. She was not anxious that they should have many female friends, certainly not any who might come in their way. It is scarcely conceivable what harm foolish girls do each other, —good-natured, well-meaning girls, with what is called no harm in them ; and yet parents are so solicitous that their children should have young friends of their own age to draw them out, enliven them, and rub off that bashfulness which makes general society a pain to them and themselves, as it is considered peculiarly unattractive in general society. Young friends, it is true, draw each up to their own stature, like young trees in a plantation ; but how much individual folly becomes joint-stock property in this close intercommunication no one can tell,—certainly not the parent. But if careful in admitting to the society of her daughters young girls of their own age, unless well assured that the intimacy was likely to prove beneficial to them, still more cautious was she in opening her doors to young men. The quiet life which she led, of course, facilitated this precaution. Persons who mix in general society must of necessity be somewhat comprehensive in the class admitted to acquaintanceship, and it is very difficult to be on one's guard to hinder acquaintanceship from becoming intimacy. The difficulty in her case might rather have lain in an opposite direction. To the good Providence of God, however, upon whom she implicitly relied in every affair of life, she committed all her cares, confident that in so doing she would be relieved from all perplexing solicitude.

A friend of her youth, somewhat her senior in years, who had been brought up at the same convent, and whom she

looked up to as an elder sister, had married two or three years before herself. The husband of her old school-fellow was an English Catholic, so that the friends only met occasionally ; but they had always kept up a correspondence by letter, chiefly upon the subject which, as mothers of families, interested them most deeply ; and they often indulged in a little castle in the air of a future union between their children, reared, as each knew the other's to be, in the same good and religious principles. When M. d'Héricourt died his widow resided principally at the old French château where she had spent her married life ; coming to England for a few months occasionally at a time. Her friend Mrs. Rochfort, was now dead, as well as her husband, and of her children one only, the eldest, Eustace, survived. In his favour Madame d'Héricourt made an exception, and to him she opened her doors, glad for the sake of the loved departed to give the solitary youth something of a substitute for the lost advantages of a home. He was a grave and steady young man, estimable rather than brilliant ; he was possessed of moderate fortune, and had come to town to study for the bar. His spare time he spent chiefly in Madame d'Héricourt's house, where he had a general invitation, and was treated more like one of the family than as a stranger. Under such circumstances an intimacy was sure to spring up between the young man and Madame d'Héricourt's daughters. It was her desire that this should be the case to a certain extent, but she carefully, though silently, watched over its progress,—especially in the case of the elder, of whom alone it could at present be question, and imperceptibly checked and kept it within moderate bounds ; for she knew that if opportunity gives the advantage of mutual knowledge, it is apt, nevertheless, in a great degree to blind the eyes as to unsuitableness of character. There is a certain charm in free and unrestricted intercourse which in a very short time will cause intimacy to ripen into a

kind of fictitious attachment, and a preference will spring up which under other circumstances would never have existed ; and this in spite of a radical want of true sympathy, not to speak of other still more serious objections.

Madame d'Héricourt took care that nothing of this kind should happen ; she did not wish to make a match ; far even was she from desiring to prevail on her daughter to marry, if perchance she might have higher views and attractions, as, after all, it was quite possible might be the case, although as yet she did not evince any vocation for a life different from that which her mother had chosen before her. Madame d'Héricourt then considered that her part in the affair ought to be much more of a negative than positive nature ; so that, after furnishing the young people with an opportunity of knowing and appreciating each other, she took care not to move a single step towards the encouragement of a mutual liking. For this end she contrived quietly to engross—if I may use so strong an expression—the friendship and confidence of the young man, instead of leaving him to the companionship of her children ; while calling him by his Christian name, she did not permit the same liberty to her daughters, a precaution which always helps to maintain a certain distance. Without allowing her object to be perceptible, she seldom left them alone together, and never for any considerable space of time ; for although she had the most perfect trust in the modest reserve of Anne, the elder, as well as of the young man himself, and was sure that their behaviour would be precisely what it would have been in her presence, yet she was well aware of the powerful effect which, as has been observed, familiar association, under no superintending eye, has in drawing young hearts together. Reasons may be given for this, but much is beyond explanation ; certain it is, that the

number of persons present weakens the sense of mutual relationship of any given two individuals, unless that relationship already exists, or has been previously established in some way ; whereas two persons, if at an impressionable age, and tolerably pleasing, may perhaps not be left alone together for very long without beginning to feel or fancy themselves something to each other. Madame d'Héricourt took care not to acquiesce for a moment in the delusion of supposing that young people can easily be like brothers and sisters to each other when no such tie exists. Under cover of that pretty fiction, how many likings have been fostered into being !

When Eustace spent the evenings with them, Madame d'Héricourt would frequently propose the reading out aloud of some book which combined instruction and amusement, encouraging occasional pauses for conversing on the topics suggested,—a proceeding which helped to elicit the young man's opinions, and enabled her to become acquainted, as well as make Anne acquainted, with his character. The young girl herself, meanwhile, sat at her work, off which she seldom raised her modest eyes, or ventured upon an observation, except when Eustace might address a question to her in a voice of gentle interest, in order to learn her opinion, to which she would reply with frankness and simplicity, but with a certain timid diffidence, which the young and ignorant ought naturally to feel, but which would seem to be regarded nowadays as a fault which it were desirable to correct. Pauline, her junior by three years, also sat at her needlework, perhaps on a low stool, in order to facilitate an occasional quiet game with a pet kitten ; and I will not answer for it that she always listened quite as well as her sister, and that the kitten had not a full half of her thoughts and attention ; for this girl of sixteen was still a thorough child in tastes and feelings, and her mother was glad it

should be so ; Pauline's mind was undeveloped, and how much better it was that it should remain shrouded in the protecting bands of childhood till it was fit to understand, to bear, and take a part in the stern realities of life ! Happy grown-up child, who keeps to her toys and her kitten instead of making a toy of those same terrible realities ! Madame d'Héricourt seldom therefore noticed, never found fault with, Pauline's wandering attention in these hours of recreation, except when it became an interruption to others ; and it is equally certain that Eustace never asked this little one's opinion.

The evenings were sometimes varied by the entrance of an old French priest, attached to a London mission ; and then the book was laid aside, and the conversation would turn on some religious topic ; or the old man would be solicited to tell them some tale of never-dying interest about the persecutions and sufferings of Catholics in the days of the French Revolution, of which he had borne his share ; or he would be asked the latest information respecting missionary labours and trials in foreign climes, or drawn to talk of his own flock, of their difficulties, their poverty, their temptations, and often of their strong faith or piety, with which the pastor's heart is cheered amongst many discouragements and disappointments. At an early hour the party always broke up.

Such was the quiet and sober recreation which succeeded a day of serious though varied occupation. Perhaps the reader may think that Madame d'Héricourt was rather precise and rigorous, and carried her principles to an extreme. Perhaps she did—perhaps she did not—I do not pretend to decide the point. I simply narrate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOST ONE.

"WHY did you look at me twice so particularly, Mama?" asked Anne softly one morning, lifting her eyes from her book.

"I did not know you observed me, child."

"I felt you were looking at me," replied Anne.

"Well, it is true," rejoined her mother, with a sigh—she did not often sigh—"I was tracing a resemblance I never noticed before, to your Aunt Anne."

"May I ask a question, dearest mother?"

Madame d'Héricourt smiled a gentle assent.

"Why do you seem sad when you mention Aunt Anne? Once, only once, before you said something about her; you told me then that we had lost her, but that she was very good. If she was very good, then, dearest mother, she has gained God if we have lost her; and you never speak sadly about the dead who loved God, not even about Papa."

"We have lost your aunt," replied Madame d'Héricourt gravely; "but I did not say she was dead. She *may* be dead; I wish I knew; a mystery hangs over her fate. There is no reason, however, my dear, that I should keep the matter secret from *you*; so, if you like, I will tell you the history of Aunt Anne till we lost sight of her. Though the remembrance saddens me, yet there is much matter of joy too."

Anne drew her chair nearer, and listened, with scarcely an interruption to

THE STORY OF AUNT ANNE.

"My sister Anne and I were, as you know, brought up together at the Convent des Oiseaux at Paris. We were

very unlike each other. I was much what I am now ; I wish I had made more progress. It pleased God I should have few difficulties to contend with, and I fear I have abused this mercy by remissness. I had a serious disposition and a placid temper ; I loved my teachers and my studies ; I shrank from the world, and dreaded the hour when I should have to leave the convent school, with its regular quiet life. Anne was extremely pretty ; her beauty was delicate and ethereal—what might be called sylph-like—and she was endowed with varied talents, and an imaginative turn of mind. She had a multitude of wishes and aspirations, accompanied with a restless longing for the exercise of these gifts of nature, and for the food after which her imagination craved. It was not precisely a love of display which possessed her, though her disposition would have rendered her peculiarly open to the temptation ; in the mean time she was well content with using her own mind as a theatre in which she was both actress and spectator ; or with admitting me to fill the part of audience.

“ Speaking of a theatre reminds me of a circumstance which formed a little epoch in the history of Anne’s mind. My father brought us both over as children from the West Indies, to place us at the convent school where we were educated. The few days he spent with us in Paris he devoted to the amusement of his little girls ; and two nights before he consigned us to the charge of the good nuns, and the hallowed precincts which were to be our abode for so many years, he took us both to the Opera. I have a very indistinct recollection of the brilliant scene ; we had neither of us ever before been within the walls of a play-house. I know I was dazzled and astonished, and returned with a very bad headache ; but upon Anne that night made a far different impression, and my clear perception of this circumstance has given the incident a prominence in my memory. Not a gesture, not an attitude,

not a note in that little world of splendour and harmony, of which she had had those few hours' glance, was lost upon my sister, and it seemed to have called into active being a corresponding world within ; nay, her very outward form appeared to be possessed and inspired, as it were, with the grace and agility she had witnessed, as her ear had drunk in the inflexions of voice which had so charmed and bewitched her. The vacation occurred very soon after my father's departure, and we spent it at the house of a relative since dead. Here I often caught Anne singing a sort of recitative and attitudinizing in her own room before the looking-glass—not, I verily believe, from any motive of vanity, but for the sake of indulging in the pleasure of imitating the *pose* and voice of the Opera-singers. Her great delight, however, was to induce me to play and sing, and, while I sat thus employed at the instrument, she would invent and execute simultaneously a kind of mute ballet in which a little story was embodied. This amused me much, but it was more than amusement to Anne. 'Music is poetry,' she used to say : 'all the world knows that ; but so is dancing,—I mean real dancing, such as I saw at the Italian Opera. I did not know it was so till I saw Taglioni that night. Now all movement seems to me to fall into cadence, and when I hear a dramatic strain, I feel suddenly endowed with gracefulness ; life seems turned into a poem.' Anne was my senior by two years ; but, had I been older, I should probably never have shared her enthusiasm, which proceeded, I believe, from a latent dramatic genius. Once she said, 'I think I should have liked to be an actress ;' but this I told her I thought wrong. 'Perhaps so,' Anne replied musingly.

"My sister was not able to cultivate her taste at our school, the nuns put a stop to the theatrical gesticulating the very first time that the new pupil was detected indulging in the amusement. Anne was not happy ; she became

very silent and absent, and made little progress in her studies, although her abilities were good ; even in music she did not advance, and I found out the reason. She told me she *thought* to music ; I believe that, while practising, she composed stories, in which she played some interesting part, or she mused on some favourite idea, upon which, she told me, ‘ the light of the music fell, and made it glow like a jewel.’ Practising, of course, while this imaginative process continued was out of the question. It was much the same with everything else. Anne’s mind was so constituted as to pour itself forth all in one direction, and she was living an inner life quite apart from, and even at variance with, her outward existence. Need I say that piety suffered as well ? It is true, and I am most confident, for I had her own assurance when we argued the point one day, that the thoughts in which she took delight were not only innocent but lofty and ennobling ; still, having self for centre, the love of God was so far excluded, and, if she did not actually turn her back upon Him and forfeit His grace, she lived habitually out of His presence. My sister was not judged fit to make her first communion at the usual age ; it was deferred accordingly to the period appointed for my own. I think Anne was mortified at the delay, but I hardly fancy she regretted it ; a sure instinct apprized her, I believe, of the antipathy which the Spirit of God within her must feel to this life of nature in which she indulged, and made her shrink from so near an approach to Him from whom she was keeping back her heart ; or, rather, that same Spirit of grace, who reproves the world of sin, would not leave her in ignorance of her offence or of the true reason why the face of God was not towards her. For, although she continued for some time to defend herself when I assured her that there was sin, and not imperfection only, in the day-dreaming to which she gave herself up, after a while she suddenly dropped the subject, and became very sad and silent. She appeared also to be

taking more pains with her daily tasks, but it was all in a very spiritless and lifeless way, and the change was far from satisfactory. Indeed faults came into notice, or sprang into being now, from which she had hitherto seemed free, and that sweetness of temper which she had before always manifested, was frequently disturbed. I have reason to believe that she had consulted her confessor upon the subject of the kind of inner drama which she was constantly playing, and that he had forbidden the pernicious practice. My sister had put it away from obedience, and because she would not offend God by known sin ; but the trial was a sore one to her."

"But why," asked Anne, modestly, "should this act of obedience, which must have so far been agreeable to God, have given strength to any evil feelings ; still more, how could it have created them ?"

"Because, my dear child, I believe there was little love in the act. We seek naturally our happiness, our contentment ; it is *that* we are still seeking when we look for it out of God, the only good. Our happiness is love, love of the Supreme Good ; but earthly things can put for a while a fair surface upon their vanity and give a temporary satisfaction, especially while hope is strong, as it is in youth. Hence Anne had found a sort of deceitful happiness in her day-dreams : this she was called upon to sacrifice ; she complied, but reluctantly, and from the fear rather than the love of God. Deprived of her habitual food, she seemed to have nothing in its place ; for the consolations of religion and the sweetness of God's communications to devout souls are not for those who give grudgingly.

"About this period we went for the last time to spend our vacation with the kind relative whom I have already mentioned, and whose death was before long to leave us without friends in Paris beyond the convent walls. It happened on one occasion that a Jesuit father preached

at the church which we frequented. He was a man of deep piety, and, as is common in such cases, he spoke with that unction and persuasive power which experimental knowledge of what is taught can alone impart. He took for his text those words of the prophet Isaias : ‘ If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy own will on my holy day, and call the Sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify Him, while thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found, to speak a word ; then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father.’ He spoke of the mystical sabbath here typified, the rest of God in the soul. God is our centre, our place of rest ; He is that everlasting sabbath of repose for which the soul longs, and which He sets before her as her goal. But how shall she attain to this centre while still ‘ in the way’ ; for God is in heaven and she on earth ? She has not far to go. In the soul which is in grace there is a new heaven and a new earth. The Triune God comes to keep holy-day with it ; and His centre, the throne of His glory, is within the centre of that soul, as in its sanctuary. If the soul thus honoured would enjoy the privileges of this heavenly sabbath, she must cease from work, she must lay aside all human operations, all human desires, all mere human acts. She must turn her foot away from doing her own natural will, however innocent that will may often seem ; nay, there must not be a word on her tongue even which is her own, the mere expression of unsanctified nature. If we would enjoy rest in God, we must suffer God to rest in us ; ‘ for His place is in peace,’ and this sabbatical rest which He desires to keep within us must suppress all self-activity as its necessary condition. Such are the terms on which alone we can hope to be raised to the contemplative love of God, those ‘ high places of the earth,’ that Mount Sion

within us, in which it pleases Him to dwell, in which He has established His mercy-seat, and from which the holy Psalmist beseeches Him to shine forth : 'Thou that sittest upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses. Shew us thy face, O God, and we shall be saved.' Even so, O Lord, exclaimed the preacher, shine forth before all the powers of our soul, that, drawn together towards that inner centre of unity, that 'Jerusalem which is built as a city which is compact together,' they may go up like 'the tribes of the Lord,' as one man, 'to the testimony of Israel.' There shall the soul find 'the abundance' which Thou hast prepared 'for them that love Thee'; there shall she be fed with 'the inheritance of Jacob our father.'

"Much more did the preacher say, which I have forgotten. Not a word, however, was lost on Anne, a flood of light was poured in upon her soul, and from that moment she was a changed person. She could do nothing by halves; hers seemed that alternative which presses so peculiarly on some natures—all for God or all for the world. 'I cannot divide myself,' she said to me one day. 'I feel that my salvation is bound up with my perfection; God seems to have shown me this; it is my weakness that renders it necessary.' And so she found matter of humiliation to herself in all the graces and favours which, I believe, from this time forward God vouchsafed to her in rich abundance.

"Not long after we had both made our first communion temporal calamities fell thick upon us. The news reached us of our father's death, and shortly after we heard that his affairs had been left in great confusion; and then again, after a brief suspense, we received the astounding information that we were actually penniless. My father's property was to be sold, and it was not expected to realize a sufficient sum to meet the demands of his creditors. There was no provision, therefore, for us, his two only chil-

dren, who from rich heiresses were suddenly by this severe stroke become destitute orphans. What was to be our future? The relative to whom I have alluded as residing in Paris was now dead, and other relatives we had not ; at least none of whose existence we were cognisant. Friends we had none, save the good nuns, and of acquaintance, only such as we had casually met at our cousin's house in the vacations. Amongst these, your father, M. de Sablon, had been a frequent visitor. Five-and-twenty years my senior, to my childish eyes he had seemed, if not old, certainly not young ; and his marked though quiet notice of me had accordingly gratified me much, as testifying the approbation of a highly honourable and estimable man of a paternal age. I also often heard him spoken of in terms of high praise, and had personally the frequent opportunity of observing his deep and fervent piety. Such being his character, and such my regard for him, it need have been matter of no surprise had I hesitated, under other circumstances, to decline an offer of marriage on his part ; but, coming, as that offer did, at a moment when, I must own, I shrank with some consternation from the life either of dependence or of toilsome exertion which lay before me, I considered it as a providential relief from the embarrassments of poverty. I was grateful for the disinterested affection of a man whom I truly valued, and was gratified by the esteem and approbation which it unequivocally imported. Need I say I never had cause to repent the step I took?

“But to return to Anne. You might perhaps expect that her choice would soon be made, and that her call to the religious life was clear. Not so, however. She appeared at present to have no evident vocation. Her director was decidedly of this opinion ; neither, I think, was she tempted to differ from his judgment, in which, at any rate, she submissively acquiesced. My desire, as you may well suppose, was that my dear sister, in the event of not being

called to a higher life, should accept a home under our roof ; a wish in which my husband cordially joined. Anne agreed to profit by our offer for a short period, in order to afford time for deliberation with regard to her future life ; but she clearly gave me to understand that, if not worthy to become the spouse of Christ in religion, she meant to earn her own livelihood in some respectable situation, suited to her abilities. I did not argue the point with her, but hoped, with the help of time and opportunity, to prevail on her to change her resolution. Meanwhile circumstances arose which appeared likely to render my persuasion unnecessary. Gustave de Sablon was considerably his brother's junior, and was endowed with a thousand natural good qualities, enhanced by every external advantage and accomplishment calculated to recommend him in a young person's eyes. Unfortunately he had been ill brought up as respects religious principles, or, rather, his religious training had been totally neglected. He had lost his mother while still very young, and had received an education altogether secular in its spirit, character, and aims. Irreligious associates completed the work ; but Gustave was not naturally of an infidel or irreligious turn. Early impressions would recur, and the example of his elder brother, whom he both loved and venerated, worked powerfully upon a mind led astray from truth and the paths of holiness, but neither utterly perverted nor radically corrupted. He would often say (so I have since learnt) that he wished he could believe, and would regret his lost faith. Another hopeful sign in Gustave was his respect and admiration for virtue superior to his own, and the attraction which he experienced towards genuine piety. Sanctity, however high, however far removed from his ken, had still austere, if not winning charms in his eyes. Such being his sentiments, it is hardly surprising that a being like Anne, uniting to every ornament of nature so many higher gifts, should touch his heart.

All the good elements within him combined to render the impression made by my sister's beauty, sweetness, and merits, as deep as it was sudden. Knowing, however, his disqualification in a religious point of view, although at that time not fully aware of its extent, I could not allow myself to cherish the hopes I might otherwise have entertained, neither did I believe that Anne, who seemed little disposed to engage herself by any earthly tie, was likely to be induced to change her views in favour of one who, to say the least, neglected the duties of religion. I believed her also to be so totally engrossed with her new feelings, and so filled with the love of God, as to have room in her heart for nothing else, certainly for nothing discordant.

"I was mistaken in my confidence, and had yet to learn the difference between what we possess by nature and what is lent to us, as it were, by grace. Upon certain natural qualities you can almost reckon under any circumstances or under any temptations ; they seem an integral part of us, like our bodily members ; but of those virtues and dispositions which are the gift of grace, and the real treasure of the soul, that soul may be robbed in one unguarded hour ; especially if exposed to opposite influences, before habits have been acquired, the old nature thoroughly subdued, and the new life established and fortified upon the ruins of self-love. Fair and sweet was the first bloom of this divine life in Anne's soul, but it was neither the full flower nor the fruit as yet. She had truly said that she must be all for the world or all for God, and for awhile I began to think it would be all for the world once more—all for the world once more, at least, in the shape of an engrossing earthly affection. Had this attraction presented itself before the sweet offer to her soul which I have recorded had taken place, I feel convinced that she would have yielded up her whole heart to it without reserve, without inquiry, with

all the abandonment of her deep and tender nature. As it was, I must do her the justice to say that she was held back to a great degree, as I afterwards discovered, by her uncertainty as to Gustave's attention to his religious duties—of his free-thinking opinions she was entirely ignorant, as indeed I was myself. Meanwhile her reserve of manner and his own bashfulness, the effects of a true and deep affection, united to keep him silent; but no one could mistake his feelings. At last he spoke to me, told me that his whole soul was devoted to Anne, and besought me to plead his cause. I need not enter into the particulars of all that occurred; suffice it to say that I frankly replied that, much as I loved him, I could not interest myself in his favour until assured of his religious state. Gustave was too upright and honourable to disguise the truth from me; but he professed himself well disposed, and said that his love for Anne had increased his desire to return to the belief and practice of his earliest, happiest, and best days. He did not deny, however, that the poison which he had imbibed from intercourse with unbelievers still rankled in his mind; their plausible and sophistical arguments had still power over his intellect; but he would read, he would place himself under his brother's advice and direction in that respect; nay, he would do better—he would pray that the gift of faith might be restored to him, if lost, or reawakened in him, if dormant; for Gustave, as I have already said, was by no means a confirmed unbeliever. Such being the case, I promised to mention his suit to Anne, although holding him out no expectations of success, as, indeed, I had none for him myself, now that I was fully acquainted with his deplorable spiritual state.

“Little, however, had I anticipated the effort it would require on the part of my sister to relinquish her affection for him, even under any circumstances. A few months before, she would not so much as have entertained the idea

of connecting herself with one whose piety should not be a support and an encouragement to her own. Incautiously, however, she had permitted herself to love one who she well knew could be no better than a lax and tepid Christian; and now that she learnt that he whom she had allowed to usurp a place in her heart was not so much as a Christian at all, and only *wished* to be one—possibly, who could say ? for the love of her alone—the discovery burst upon her like an appalling thunder-clap, paralyzing and bewildering all her powers. Seeing, to my surprise, that she was incapable for the moment of returning an answer, I advised her to take time to consider. Meanwhile I promised that Gustave should absent himself.

“A week of silent struggle followed. One morning a few sealed lines were placed in my hand :—‘ My dearest sister, I once told you that I could not divide my affections. Shame do I take to myself that, after all I have experienced of the untold sweetness and goodness of God, I should sacrilegiously endeavour to share this little miserable heart of mine, for which He has deigned to ask, with an unbeliever. Need I say that He will never accept this partition ? He would leave me ; for, to act thus, would in me be to leave Him. The combat is over ; but I must fly temptation ; I cannot rely on my own firmness. Forgive me, dearest sister, and beg M. de Sablon to forgive me for any pain that I have caused him. I will pray for him, but will see him no more. I could not trust myself to bid you adieu, or communicate my plans to you. I have retired for one day to the convent where we were educated ; Reverend mother, who knows all, has found me a situation suitable for me ; I leave her to-morrow. Do not seek to see me, dearest Pauline ; it is better not at present. Adieu ; God be with you.’ But I did seek her, without, however, being able to persuade her to return ; indeed I desisted from the attempt when I had listened to her reasons ; for they were

just. Having determined to reject my brother-in-law's offer, she could not, as she truly represented to me, either expose herself to the trial of meeting him, or be the occasion, by residence under our roof, of separating him from the influences most likely to lead him to good. Accordingly she had accepted a situation of companion to an invalid lady, the wife of a rich merchant at Bordeaux. Time and changed circumstances might, I hoped, one day reunite us ; and so we parted, and have never met since."

Madame d'Héricourt paused, overpowered with the sorrowful recollection awakened by her recital, and then resumed : " Shortly after this, my husband received a letter from the West Indies with reference to the affairs of my late father. There were steps, it appeared, which might be taken, towards recovering for my sister and myself a share of the property ; but it was desirable that some one should be immediately empowered to act in our behalf. My husband decided upon undertaking personally to investigate the matter, and ascertaining what was proper to be done. I of course accompanied him, and we sailed without loss of time for Jamaica. I had previously received satisfactory letters from dear Anne. She said little about her mode of life, but assured me she was very happy ; indeed her letters were almost entirely confined to spiritual matters, and testified to the peace and joy which she experienced. I have here treasured up the last few lines I received from her.

" " Dearest Pauline, I have nothing to say, or too much. You will think I am a bird with only one note, and an impertinent bird too, to seem to wish to teach you, who are so much better than I am ; but I have but the old song to sing. Love God only, if you would be happy. Admit no love which is not included in that love, for He is supereminently all that is desirable—all that the senses, the intellect, or the heart delight in—*all, all, all*. I think that for the first time I seem to have a glimpse of what our

dear Lord meant when He said that whoever gave up house, or wife, or children for His sake should receive manifold more *in this life*. He is beauty, fragrance, sweetness, splendour ; not better only than these are in the earthly order, but He *is* all these, and gives Himself to us as such in so intimate a sense, that were we to have no other life as our reward than that which He would live in us here below, we should turn with contempt from these poor types to the realities, or, rather, look on them only with complacency, as being the shadows of substantial things.'

"The result of our visit to the West Indies was unsatisfactory, and we soon prepared to return ; but at the very last moment we were unexpectedly delayed by my husband's indisposition. The vessel in which we were to have sailed, and in which our friends expected our arrival, was lost on its voyage, and only a few remnants of the wreck, picked up at sea, proved the melancholy fact, while they failed to tell any further particulars of the terrible catastrophe. All had perished, but who had perished could only be learned from other sources. My husband and myself were, of course, numbered with the dead. We had written by this very vessel to signify our delay, and had also apprised our friends that, as we hoped to follow soon, they were not to expect another letter before our arrival. You can easily understand that the result of these coincidences was the firm persuasion of our death on the part of our friends in France, and that some time elapsed before contrary intelligence reached them. Gustave learned the news of his brother's supposed death about the same time that another event appeared in the public papers,—the bankruptcy of the Bordeaux merchant with whose wife my sister lived. The unfortunate man subsequently committed suicide, and left his widow a beggar. From reasons which I need not detail to you, it seems that he was neither loved nor respected ; and his wife, who, like himself, had been of obscure origin, had

no relatives or friends to assist her. The ruin of these fortunate speculators, in short, excited neither pity nor interest, and Madame Le Voisin was left to struggle with her misery unaided.

“ It was with much difficulty that Gustave discovered the poor abode which sheltered this unhappy woman. He sought it with the double object of breaking to Anne the afflicting news of the loss of her only relative, if as yet it had not reached her, and of making a tender of his services, and of a temporary home on the part of some near relatives of his own. Gustave’s attachment to my sister was undiminished, and he still cherished hopes of prevailing on her to change her determination ; but this he felt was not the moment to press his suit, and he respected her misfortune too much to intrude upon it by any allusion to the subject. He found that Anne was already acquainted with her loss, and was not more astonished at her heavenly composure than at the destitution in which he discovered her and the poor fretful woman who, so lately surrounded by every luxury, was now abandoned by dependants and servants who never loved her. Anne alone had not forsaken this poor creature, for whom she performed every menial office, and who, as I have since learned, selfishly absorbed in her own suffering, ill repaid the disinterested charity of the one friend she underservedly possessed. God alone knows what my dear sister may have endured, but a serene peace shone on her brow ; which awed Gustave’s compassion into a respectful reserve. She seemed desirous, however, to shorten the interview ; and, after speaking a few words of consolation to him who had come to console her, she took leave of him, pleading the necessity of attendance on Madame Le Voisin, whom, she assured him, she had vowed not to desert. My brother-in-law returned to his lodging to meditate upon some mode by which he might convey secret assistance to the suffering widow, and thus indirectly relieve Anne’s necessities, which

were too palpable, although she had striven to conceal them. But Madame Le Voisin was on her death-bed, and a fortnight later was borne to her grave, attended by a single but a sincere mourner.

“There was, however, another interested spectator of that funeral, who, unobserved, followed that one mourner to her obscure home. It was Gustave. Unable any longer to repress his feelings, he threw himself, in tears, at my sister’s feet, professed himself a believer, assured her it needed but her influence to complete the reform and make him a changed man, and entreated her not to reject him this second time. He had far too much delicacy to allude to her unprotected and destitute condition, but doubtless he cherished a not unreasonable hope that this consideration might—if it were needed—weigh with Anne, and lead her to see the finger of Providence pointing to a union which human prudence as well as mutual inclination seemed now to recommend. But Anne’s prudence was not human prudence. She appeared, however, if not staggered, at least too much overcome to give him a reply; she besought him to leave her that day to herself, promising that if he would call on the morrow he should have her reply. He departed, equally divided between hope and fear; but hope prevailed; and his worst anticipation was a doubtful or a procrastinating answer. What a disappointment awaited him! On his return, with a beating heart, on the following day, he found, not Anne, but a letter. It contained her adieux, with thanks for his kindness and prayers for his welfare. She had, she candidly told him, overcome the human preference which she acknowledged she had once entertained for him; she had long before committed the matter to God, and believed that He designed her for a different life, and one which would offer fewer temptations to her weak soul. Such being the case, he would not wonder at her not allowing worldly considerations to plead

in behalf of a step to which other motives had failed to move her. She had thought it better for both that she should give her answer in writing rather than by word of mouth. This, and not hesitation, was the cause of her delay. As for himself, she assured him that he would have reason hereafter to rejoice that he was spared anything which might throw a doubt on the sincerity of his convictions, or diminish the merit of his return to God. 'Let that return, my dear friend,' she concluded, 'be pure from every earthly motive. Remember me no more, except in your prayers, where alone I shall recollect you. May God be with you. Any search after me would be fruitless.' I will not describe to you Gustave's misery, nor his agonizing search, from which no prohibition could restrain him. He traced my sister to a neighbouring convent, of which he saw the Superioress, who candidly told him that she had promised Anne not to reveal the place of her retreat."

"Had she entered the convent?" asked Anne, with an uplifted countenance of deep interest.

"We thought at first she might have entered it as a lay sister," rejoined her mother, "and made strict inquiries after our return to France; but it was not so."

"And my Uncle Gustave?" asked Anne.

"He died a good Christian," replied Madame d'Héricourt.

Both mother and daughter remained silent a moment. Anne felt that the story of her aunt was finished. After a short pause they both rose, and Anne, with a gentle earnestness exclaimed, "O, how I wish I was like Aunt Anne!"

"We can copy her," replied Madame d'Héricourt, "in being docile to God's voice and teaching. All are not called to the same path."

Each then turned to the duties of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

FRESH IDEAS.

SCENE, a comfortable bedroom on the ground-floor, with a large window looking out on a small garden at the back of the house—such a garden as London can afford. There was a good-sized tree in it, which, notwithstanding the dinginess of its trunk and the dustiness of its leaves, had a refreshing influence. There was a rustic bench, on which no cleanly-attired person probably had ever had the hardihood to sit down, but which might be considered to impart a certain air of repose to the inclosure, with a few square yards of grass, which, if not very flourishing, were pleasanter to the eye than grey slates, and seemed to furnish no despicable entertainment to some smoke-dyed sparrows.

Four young ladies occupied the room. The eldest, Emma Wyndham, of whom we seem to have almost lost sight—an accident which, we can certify, seldom occurred to the lady herself,—is lying on a sofa at the foot of the bed, attired in a very tasty white dressing-gown, trimmed with delicate pink ribbons. It becomes her, and she knows it ; she was well enough by this time to have worn an ordinary gown, which, indeed, would have required no greater effort to put on than this pretty robe ; but then what is the use of having an ornamental dressing-gown if we can never show it ? Convalescence furnishes the opportunity for an appropriate dress of its own, and, to Emma at least, this was one of the small consolations of that state. Gertrude and Anne are sitting near her, and by each other ; they are both fair girls, and so far like, but there is a contrast in many other respects. Anne is the most majestic, Gertrude the most graceful. The rose had been more liberal to Anne's cheek—not *too* liberal ; there was allowance for the blush of youth

to deepen it, as it often did, without detriment to its charm ; but the slight colour which relieved the transparent whiteness of Gertrude's complexion went and came like the evanescent hues of the mother-of-pearl. Anne is occupied with some needlework ; Gertrude is watching her sister. The other young lady—ah ! we had almost forgotten her, she is so very insignificant—little Pauline, is in the background, nursing a small cat, or large kitten, which has one eye shut and the other on the sparrows.

“How very provoking !” observed Emma, as she looked out on the few square yards of grass ; “and such a fine day too !”

“You are longing, I am sure, to get out for a little air,” said Anne, with affectionate sympathy.

“O, no ; I have air enough,” said Emma. “I was thinking how much I should have liked to be at Mrs. De Lacy's breakfast. I cannot think why you did not go, Gertrude.”

“I preferred sitting with you.”

“Nonsense ! I have plenty of company without you, don't you see ? I should recommend your changing your mind, you silly thing. Algernon was not to call for Mama till twelve o'clock ; so you have still time to go home and dress.”

“Dear me !” exclaimed Pauline, “what a late hour Mrs. De Lacy breakfasts at !”

“It is not a real breakfast, Pauline,” interposed her better-informed sister, “but what we should call in France a *déjeuner à la fourchette*.”

“Oh ! a sort of luncheon ; I understand. My pretty Tom, my pretty Tom-tit” : this was addressed to the cat. “Do look at him ; when I speak to him he winks one eye.”

Anne laughed, and Emma cast a glance of pitying contempt. “How old is it ?” she said, turning to the elder of the two sisters.

"Just eight months old," said Pauline, before Anne had time to answer, "and so wise, though it is still quite playful."

"Perhaps I am to believe that this may be the case with its little mistress too, of whom, and not the cat, I was speaking," replied Emma, relaxing into a good-humoured smile.

"Now, for shame, Mr. Thomas!" continued Pauline.

"Really, Pauline, you will make our new friend think you quite a goose. You talk of nothing but the cat," said her sister.

"But he's scratching, Anne. Ah! he wants to get after the birds; I thought he had some reason"; and Mr. Tommy bounded from Pauline's lap and was off through the open window among the dusky sparrows.

"If Tommy has come to years of discretion, I wonder whether you have, Pauline," said Emma.

"I shall be seventeen next birthday." She was only just sixteen, but young things always count from their next birthday.

"I should not have thought Pauline was near seventeen," observed Gertrude; "why she is only a year younger than I am."

"I should think you have gone through ten lives for her one," said Emma; "that is the reason she is so blooming, and you so pale. Well, it's all to come in time, Pauline, I suppose."

"What is to come?"

"Your wisdom, of course," said Anne, "which Emma thinks is later in coming than the cat's. However, Mama says she does not mind Pauline being like a child, so long as she is not childish—really silly, I mean."

"And what does Madame d'Héricourt consider to be childishness and silliness?" asked Emma, with a return of the supercilious manner.

"She tells us we are childish when we are not reasonable," said Pauline, who had just found out that her good sense was questioned"; but if it amuses me to play with a cat, she says that it is not at all unreasonable, unless I play with it when I ought to be doing something else; and it *does* amuse me very much"; and little Pauline's young face looked as resolute as its exquisite sweetness permitted; and then she came and gave Emma a kiss, for the dear child thought she had spoken sharply.

"After all, I am not sure that the company dawdling about Mrs. De Lacy's lawn at Kensington are a bit more sensibly employed," observed Gertrude; "London recreations are really very silly."

"Do you go out much, Anne?" asked Emma, who had not taken up her sister's remark.

"Not much in London," replied Anne, "because Mama is not a good walker."

"And that makes me so glad when we go to Héricourt in the summer," interposed Pauline; "for then we have such nice walks and rides. Oh! but all the violets will be over this year; I am so sorry."

"Anne is nearly as bad as dear little Pauline," said Emma, who had caressingly detained the engaging child,—engaging even to her sophisticated taste, while she thought of her as a child. "Don't you know what going out means?"

"I beg your pardon, I am very stupid, you mean going out in society, in the great world. No, we don't go out at all in that kind of way. Mama pays and receives very few visits."

"How very dull for you!"

"We don't find it dull; indeed, to say the truth, I generally find paying visits rather dull."

"That is, my dear, because you see so few people, and are so seldom in company that you never get well into the thing. But do you always live this sort of life?"

"Mama has, I believe, always lived a very retired life since Papa's death."

"But why does not she let some one else take you out? *You* are not a couple of widows at any rate."

"Mama never lets us go anywhere without her," replied Anne, colouring a little.

Gertrude observed the blush, and thinking Emma's abruptness had pained her, asked her if their father had long been dead.

"O, yes," replied Anne; "I can hardly remember him."

"Dear me!" resumed Emma; "then your mother is mourning for him a very long time. I should have thought she must have recovered his loss before this, and be able to give you a little more recreation."

"Mama is not lamenting Papa's loss at all," replied Anne, with perfect simplicity. "She always seems so happy when she talks about him. You quite mistook me; we have plenty of recreation, I assure you. I only said Mama does not go out in the gay world; and so she does not take us; and we really have no wish; indeed, I feel quite too shy and stupid in a crowd to be amused."

"But was no change made when you struck seventeen?" asked Emma; "did not Madame d'Héricourt bring you forward more, and—and so forth?" Emma scarcely knew how to express it, only she had a very decided notion that at seventeen education concluded, lessons and books were put aside, and amusement and pleasure-hunting began.

"O, yes," replied Anne, "Mama *did* make a change"; I remember on my seventeenth birthday she told me now that I was not a child any longer, but becoming a woman, I must begin to help her more in household duties. She told me I must order dinner, and keep part of the accounts, and see to the mending of all the clothes; that is, I was to be responsible for holes; I must mend them, or see they were mended. I was to write some of her letters for

her, too ; and she almost always took me if she made a chance call of civility, and sent for me if any lady called on her."

Emma burst into a hearty fit of laughter. "Well, that was indeed a pleasant coming out ! You have reason to congratulate yourself on the gaiety of your first season."

"But I don't think Mama fancies we require more gaiety and amusement when we reach seventeen," interposed Pauline. "She always says children want most amusement and old people least ; and so I suppose young people want something between the two."

"Such as promotion to darning stockings," said Emma, "on which charming occupation I see Anne is engaged."

"I rather like darning stockings."

"And there is nothing," resumed Emma, "which ladies' maids dislike so much, I think ; at least, Roper always forgets mine, and Mama likes us to have our stockings darned, as she says we can wear them under our boots. She is a dear old stingy thing, when the saving is kept out of sight—mammy is."

Here Anne dropped her stocking, opened wide her blue eyes, and stared outright ; but Emma did not notice it, being engaged at the moment in inspecting her finger nails, and ran on.

"However, you have at least visited, and seen visitors, since you were grown up ?"

"Yes," replied Anne, who had recovered from her surprise at the extraordinary language applied to Mrs. Wyndham, "Mama thinks it right I should, but of course it is not very entertaining. I did not mind much about a visitor when I was a child, for I could amuse myself in a corner, and do as I liked ; and if Pauline and I were noisy, Mama only sent us out of the room. But now it is different : I must take a part, and sit and listen."

"And bear your share in the conversation," added

Emma. "Of course your mother wishes to draw you out, and teach you to talk and be agreeable. It is an art which requires practice; only you seem to have but indifferent opportunities for cultivating it."

"No, I am sure Mama does not wish me to talk much. She says young people can have little to say worth hearing by strangers; only if they are kind enough to address me, I ought to learn to reply readily and without embarrassment. Generally speaking, she says, I must be a listener, not a speaker; and I am never to interrupt or introduce a topic myself while I am so young, because that is not modest; but at the same time I must be an intelligent listener, not sit merely pretending I am listening, so that I may be ready to give a proper answer if spoken to, because it is an impertinence to let our attention wander while in company. Now you see, so far as my own recreation goes, I would often much rather read a book than——"

"Than be an intelligent listener to some dull fogie. I should think so."

"Than to have to listen to the conversation at a formal visit," substituted Anne. "But dear Mama says that this is good discipline, and courtesy is a duty; only I do not reckon it as part of my recreation."

"Indeed I should think not, on such terms."

"But we *have* plenty of recreation," reiterated Anne. "Mama takes care we should, and still more at Héricourt. Have we not, Poll?"

"O, yes; dear Héricourt!" exclaimed Pauline—"we are so happy there; you have no idea, Emma, what fun we have. Last year, on Mama's fête-day—don't you remember, Anne?—we got up an entertainment on the lawn for the poor villagers, and we had some pretty new gowns made, as a surprise, for all the girls who had won the medal for good conduct; and then Anne and I dressed them, and we ourselves put on two of the frocks which we had taken

off ; and that amused the girls so much ; and we cooked the dinner, and laid the cloth, and waited on them."

"What ! the frocks of some dirty poor children ?" said Emma, with a face of disgust. "I think that was doing penance rather than keeping holiday."

"They were *not* dirty," said Anne. "You may be sure they had come clean and in their best."

"Your cooking for them I think was a questionable favour, at any rate. What the extempore cooking of two young ladies may be I can hardly conceive, but I know it would puzzle *me* to set about that office."

"Oh, but Anne is a very good cook, and I a tolerable one," said Pauline. "I was kitchen-maid under her, you know" ; and Pauline laughed, and her eyes danced, at the recollection.

"And pray where did you both acquire this unusual accomplishment ?"

"Is it unusual ?" asked Anne, simply. "Mama was very particular that we should both of us know how to cook, and make preserves, and all that ; and they declare I have a particular vocation for it," she added, smiling. "Mama says one cannot give directions to servants to any purpose, or superintend things properly, without some little knowledge of the sort, and that without this we may often complain of things unjustly and at random ; and many other good reasons she says there are why we should learn these sorts of thing."

"And does Madame d'Héricourt cook too ?"

"She *can*, and she does sometimes."

"Oh, yes !" interposed Pauline. "I know Mama often dresses some dish at Héricourt to take to the poor ; she loves waiting on the poor." Here Anne gave her sister a look, and Pauline coloured and was silent.

"Oh, don't stop her ; I like so to hear," said Gertrude, with beaming eyes.

"But Mama, I know, does not like our talking about what she does," said Anne; "so I am obliged to keep a little check on Poll, who is a chatter-box."

"I am sure it was all very innocent and good," said Emma; "I wish I was half as good. *There* is one"—pointing to Gertrude—"who would make an apt scholar in these matters, for which I must own I have no turn; perhaps I am a little fastidious—I inherit it from mammy; but it would quite suit my sister to pay a visit to the kitchen. Do you know we have a pious cook, and she is something of a director to Gertrude. Now, don't cast such an imploring look on me, dear, for I am only laughing, and do not mean to vex you. But how came Madame d'Héricourt," she continued, addressing Anne, "to understand the culinary art, if it is not indiscreet to ask the question?"

"I have heard her say that the nuns taught her at the convent where she was educated."

"Well, I think you might all as well be in a convent, for the quiet, sober life you lead. However, as you are happy, Anne, I will not pity you. Perhaps people cannot well miss what they never had; and, if you lose pleasures, maybe you are spared disappointments." Emma paused, and a look of care stole for an instant over the blooming countenance of youth. "But there is one thing strikes me," she resumed. "How are you ever to marry, my dear, if you never see any one, and are never seen by any one? I suppose you expect to marry some day, and do not wish to remain single all your life long?"

"I am sure I don't know what I wish," replied Anne, laughing. "Indeed, I never look much into the future."

"That is all very well, my dear, very well to say; but you will not persuade me it has never crossed your mind to say to yourself, 'I wonder whether I shall ever marry?'"

"No, I cannot say it has never crossed my mind, but I

don't trouble myself as to how it will be brought about, if I *am* to marry. What is the use? I might as well sit thinking about what the weather will be next year."

"Certainly, if you have as little control over the matter; and that is just what I say. I don't see how you are ever to get acquainted with any one, or even choose your own friends, if you never go into society. I wish you saw Mama's visiting-list; we keep it alphabetically; and, when we go out of town in August, it is quite a job leaving all our cards; indeed, the footman has to take a good number round."

"Dear me! and do you know all these people well?"

"O, no; most of them are mere acquaintances; but we are all meeting frequently at balls and parties, and at dinners, or the opera; and then I ride with Algernon in Hyde Park very often. Out of such a number of acquaintances one selects friends; some remain only acquaintances, and never could grow into more, however long you might know them. For others you feel at once a sort of affinity; it is quite astonishing how soon you understand each other; it is a sort of Freemasonry."

"I don't understand you quite," said Anne, laying down her work and looking very earnest.

"What I mean is that some persons suit you; you cannot exactly say why, but you know it at once."

"How can you?"

"Very soon at least. Now, perhaps, for one who does suit, there are fifty who do not. Apply this to the subject of marriage. How are you likely to marry, or, at least, to marry to your liking, if you do not see a variety? It is a mere chance, and a bad chance too."

"This is quite a new view to me. Mama has not often talked to me about marriage; and, when she has, she has only dwelt on its duties. But it seems to me that in general society I should never get to know people's real characters. Besides, I hardly like the idea; or perhaps I have misunderstood

you. Just now you talked of going out as being only a recreation."

"Quite what I feel myself," observed Gertrude. "To go out, as it is called, for diversion, but at the same time to keep in view the prudential object of an establishment in life, is repugnant to my ideas."

"Now you are unfair, Gertrude" said her sister, colouring rather angrily; "did I say anything of the sort? I, at any rate, go out with the single purpose of amusing myself, and of making friends; and all I observed was that *if* we remain boxed up within four walls, helping cooks and housemaids all our days, it is impossible to make friends; nor have we a chance of marrying. This, I suppose, is rather different from instituting a regular hunt, as you would insinuate."

"I don't think," said Pauline, who had been attentively listening to what was to her a rather novel style of conversation, "that *I* wish to marry. Mama says so much about its being a wife's duty to please her husband. Now I know what pleases dear Mama; so long as we do nothing wrong we please her; but suppose our husbands were comical and unreasonable,—some people are,—it would be hard work."

"I don't think you need distress yourself about these matters, Pauline," said Anne, who began to look uneasy, as if desirous of changing the conversation.

"As for me," said Emma, laughing, "I shall consider it is my husband's business to please *me*. I expect to please sufficiently by looking pretty and making myself agreeable. Dear me! Pleasing is not such hard work. There is nothing so easy as to please most men, if you go the right way about it; and nothing so difficult if you set to work the wrong way. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred will be better pleased at their wives appearing to advantage and doing honour to their choice, than at all your solidities

of character. This gratifies a man's pride ; and remember, most men are proud. The other point to be attended to is to be cheerful ; don't let him be bothered, and don't bother him—this contents his selfish love of ease. Recollect, most men are selfish about their ease. You may have fifty faults—dear good man, he will forgive them all most charmingly, so that you look to these two points ; nay, he will be the veriest slave of all your caprices.”

“Dear Emma,” said Anne, “pray do not talk in that way ; you cannot be serious.”

“Indeed I am ; I never was more so.”

“But it seems so wrong to try to please one's husband through his faults, even supposing you are right about men's dispositions. Surely this would be a piece of treachery to one so near and dear to you.”

“There is no difference in principle that I can see between Pauline's anticipations of carrying out her mother's injunctions, should she be united to a ‘comical and unreasonable husband.’ How is one to please a comical and unreasonable man without humouring his faults ? Now all *I* say is, that you may save yourself a great deal of trouble by attending to those two particulars alone.”

“There *is* a great difference in principle, I am sure,” replied Anne, “between what Mama means and what you say ; only you are more fluent than I am, and I cannot explain myself.”

“And as for the treachery,” continued Emma, “it is a kind of treason, I assure you, which men will readily forgive, and be quite obliged to you for practising. Dear me ! there is nothing so forgiving as a man is to all women, with those two exceptions : he cannot stand a disagreeable face, a discontented voice, or to be made uncomfortable. Dear mammy, I see, has always gone on that plan, and does just what she pleases ; and Papa knows she does, and thinks there is nothing like her in the world, for all that.”

Anne coloured deeply ; she did not like the conversation. Emma had till lately been too feeble to talk much, and too much subdued to show herself in her true colours. Anne had nursed and attended on her, and Emma had been grateful and affectionate in return ; but with Gertrude only had she had much conversation. Upon far different topics had they interchanged ideas, and Gertrude accordingly well knew how little Emma's worldly off-hand talk was likely to please.

" My dear Emma," she said, hoping to check her, " do you not see you shock Anne ? She takes all your nonsense literally." Poor Gertrude knew that Emma was much more in earnest than she would have liked her new friends to think.

" Well, we will change the conversation, if my dear nurse does not like it ; but really I thought I was talking very good sense, and did not mean to shock any one. By the bye, Anne, who is that grave young man whom Gertrude says she met here the other evening ?" Emma had as yet not been considered strong enough to join the family circle.

" Mr. Rochfort, you mean, I suppose ?" said Anne. " O, he is often here."

" Indeed !" said Emma, looking interested ; " and pray who is Mr. Rochfort ?"

" He is the only child of a dear friend of Mama's who is dead."

" She is very fond of him," said Pauline, " and calls him Eustace ; but *we* don't."

" Perhaps you will by-and-by," said Emma, laughing ; " Eustace is a pretty name—and an only child, too ! Come, I begin to have some hopes, Anne."

" Of what ?"

" You simple girl, I have a mind not to tell you."

" Then pray don't," said Anne, looking rather embarrassed ; for she began to have a vague fear of her friend's random remarks.

"But *do* tell us," said Pauline; "I am curious to know."

"Well, I suspect.... no I won't."

"Suspect what?—something about Mr. Rochfort?"

"It requires no conjuror to guess what I suspect, when I hear a young man, only a friend of course, is constantly at the house."

"There is no reason but what I stated," said Anne gravely; "my mother's affection for her old friend Mrs. Rochfort...."

"I have no doubt—no doubt whatever; but it does not follow that something may not come of it. Don't pretend you do not understand, my dear. It is an arranged affair, you may be sure."

"But I *do* understand you," said Anne; "only you are mistaken," she added, with a shade of displeasure.

"I should not like Anne to marry Mr. Rochfort," observed Pauline, "he is so grave; I should be afraid of him. Do you know he does not like Tommy?"

"O, that is conclusive against him," exclaimed Emma, laughing.

"You had much better go and look for Tommy," said Anne, rising, "than join in all this nonsense; and here comes Mama, who, I am sure, would agree with me."

Emma coloured, and instinctively raising her finger to her lip, hurriedly said, "Pray do not allude to what I was saying of Mr. Rochfort; I was only joking."

"You need not fear," replied Anne; "I should be quite ashamed to allude to it."

Emma had little reverence in her disposition, but Madame d'Héricourt excited as much of that feeling as she was perhaps capable of experiencing. She stood in awe of her, which, consciously or unconsciously, influenced her whole bearing while her kind entertainer, to whom she really felt grateful, was in her presence. Perhaps she could not well

have accounted to herself for this unaccustomed feeling, and, if called on to do so, might have referred it partly to the tall, majestic figure and composed demeanour of the lady, and partly to the remarkable fact that Madame d'Héricourt had been proved to be up and dressed at the early hour of five; so that ere the one day had closed to Emma the morrow had begun to her. This circumstance marked her as so utterly unlike any one with whom the self-indulgent young girl had been associated, as to tend to remove her from the sphere of familiarity. Be this as it may, her presence, in conjunction with her own illness, had hitherto had a sobering effect on Emma, and the result was to blind Madame d'Héricourt to her guest's mischievous faults. Gertrude was so very different, and with Gertrude alone she was really acquainted; she gave the sister credit accordingly for, at least, being not altogether dissimilar. Emma, besides, had been a little frightened about herself. Though never in actual danger, she had been seriously ill for the first time in her life, and—at Gertrude's suggestion it is true—had asked to see a priest, and had made her confession. All this served to put the careful mother off her guard, and she had not only pressed Mrs. Wyndham to allow Emma to remain until perfectly recovered, an act of kindness to which charity anyhow would have prompted her, but had allowed her two girls free and unrestricted intercourse with the young stranger. Mrs. Wyndham visited her daughter daily, but of course was left alone with her; and during her short personal interviews with Madame d'Héricourt, she was too much occupied in anxious inquiries respecting her child's progress, and in kind and courteous thanks for the care bestowed on her, to betray the worldliness of her own character. Leaving Gertrude very frequently to spend the evening, she had herself made a practice of returning home at dinner-time. As Mr. Wyndham, however, expected to be detained in the House

to a late hour all that week, on account of some question of importance under discussion, Madame d'Héricourt had proposed that Mrs. Wyndham should join the family circle every evening, when she hoped also that Emma would be strong enough to be of the party. Mrs. Wyndham had cordially accepted the invitation, and was expected on the morrow of the day on which the conversation first related took place, which Madame d'Héricourt cut short by her entrance.

She came to engage her two daughters to leave their guest for a few hours' repose. "My dear," she said, addressing Emma, "you look a little heated; I fear my children have tired you."

"O, not at all," replied Emma. "I am really getting quite strong, and mean to dress by-and-by"—a glance at the white wrapper—"and join you this evening in the drawing-room, as a trial of my powers."

"Then there is all the more reason for quiet now; so I shall carry off your company."



CHAPTER VIII.

A FIRST INTRODUCTION.

EMMA, as we know, was not altogether wrong in her guess that Madame d'Héricourt entertained certain views with reference to Eustace Rochfort, but she was entirely wrong in supposing that the match was an arranged affair in the mind of the mother. Madame d'Héricourt was far too fearful of allowing herself to supplant Providence in her care for her daughter's interests, or to forestall the will of God, to act or decide with any precipitation. Nay, she had

come to the resolution of speedily removing Anne for a considerable time from the society of Eustace, who had confided to her the secret of his own attachment. Madame d'Héricourt considered that he was yet very young, and that it would be well to test its solidity by a little absence. Well satisfied that, at present, no suspicion of the preference entertained for her had ever crossed her daughter's mind, she was desirous that none should be awakened. Anne was of a reserved nature ; not, however, so much reserved to others as reserved to herself. She was not one who dwelt on her own character or feelings, although she minutely analyzed her motives ; but she indulged little in mental speculation, and she had spoken truly when she said that she seldom looked into the future. Her mother had strongly impressed on her the duty of attending to what we are about ; engrafting this attention on recollection of the Divine presence. Let one eye, she would say, be always on God within you, the other on your work, and you will have no time to think of yourself or others ; or, if you think of yourself, it will only be to note, in the clear light within, your faults as they occur ; for God does not fail to minister this light to those who live in His presence.

Anne strove to follow this advice continually, and found her happiness in it ; and so her days, which now numbered eighteen summers, had passed in a tranquil rotation of duties performed as pleasures, and pleasures enjoyed in the spirit of duties. Although as yet nothing announced a higher vocation, still nothing precluded it, and Madame d'Héricourt was extremely anxious that Anne's mind should not be preoccupied in any way till that point was decided. It was her intention, upon her return to France this summer, to make a Retreat with her daughter, and she purposed to recommend her to seek on that occasion light from God to know in what state of life He desired she should serve Him. Eustace's declaration had taken her by surprise. He was,

as has been observed, very young, and she had not expected that the restricted intercourse she had permitted with one of her daughter's quiet and retired demeanour could have led to anything further than a certain preliminary acquaintance with each other's dispositions and tastes. Like other mothers before her, Madame d'Héricourt had made a miscalculation in this respect ; at least as regarded the young man, upon whom she accordingly imposed a year's silence on the subject, during which time he was to consider himself perfectly free ; she secretly reserving to herself the power of abridging this period of probation if she saw no necessity for its prolongation. Willingly would she have immediately left London, and thus broken off all intercourse for the present ; but some business of importance demanded her presence for a few weeks longer ; and in requiring Eustace to make his visits less frequent, and enjoining upon him a strict caution not to betray his sentiments, she believed she had sufficiently provided against all risk of any suspicion arising in what she knew to be the simplest and most unsuspicious of minds.

Nothing, therefore, could have possibly been more inopportune than Emma's foolish remarks ; and could Madame d'Héricourt have heard a short dialogue which took place between Pauline and Anne on the following day, she would not have been without her fears that some mischief had already been done. Little Pauline, it must be confessed, was open to the temptation of curiosity to some small extent ; besides, no veil of reserve hid, as it were, from herself, her own reflections, as they passed through her innocent, childlike mind, which lay all in the light of her own vivacious observation ; neither did any corresponding reserve of disposition hinder her from producing them.

"I wonder really whether Mama means you to marry Mr. Rochfort, Anne?"

"*Means* me to marry Mr. Rochfort!" replied Anne,

colouring, and looking almost angry, "how can you talk such nonsense?"

"Not nonsense," said Pauline demurely; "in France fathers and mothers arrange their daughters' marriages."

"Pray where did you become so learned on the subject?"

"Madame Auguste told me so."

"Who is Madame Auguste?"

"A dressmaker whom Emma sent for yesterday to give directions for a gown—such a pretty one! Anne."

"Well, never mind the gown; I am puzzled to think how you and Madame Auguste can have got so intimate."

"It was not my doing; but Emma was so free with her, and she said, 'You see that pretty little girl'—'*cette jolie petite demoiselle*' she called me—'do you know she is half French?' Upon which Madame began chattering to me and paying me compliments. *You* would have known what to say, but I did not; and so at last, when she heard we were going soon to Paris, she said she had no doubt I should soon be married."

"How very impertinent! and what did you answer?"

"I said I was only sixteen, and did not know anybody to marry."

"That was not a good answer."

"I dare say not, but I could not think of anything else to say."

"It was not likely to check her," observed Anne.

"No more it did, for, as she was putting up her parcel—she was just going away—she turned and said, 'O, that does not matter, my dear young lady. Papas and Mamas settle those affairs for their daughters in our France.' Then I ran out of the room, and heard them both laughing."

"I really shall begin to wish Emma gone," said Anne—"no I must not wish that, for it is inhospitable, but I wish she was more like Gertrude. She makes me quite uncomfortable."

And uncomfortable poor Anne truly felt, in a manner perfectly new to her. Pauline did not feel uncomfortable, but a little inquisitive. Perhaps some mischief *had* been done already.

Here is another scrap of conversation which took place, possibly about the same time, in Berkeley Square.

"Mother," said Algernon Wyndham, as he rose from a sofa, threw down a book of which he had been turning over the leaves, and passed the disengaged hand through his dark wavy locks, "I consider that book a receipt for a yawn ; have you nothing livelier for me ? We want Emma here very much."

"I have nothing amusing for you, dear, I am afraid," replied his mother, "but I will send to the library. Just put down some book ; and if you like to dine here," she continued, "you will need it, for you will not even have dull me in the evening to keep you company."

"By heavens ! then, I will do no such thing. I shall go to the club. I thought you said you had no dinner engagements this week."

"No more I have, and I shall *dine* at home ; but I have promised to spend the early part of every evening this week with Madame d'Héricourt and her daughters. Our dear Emma, too, hopes to be strong enough to join us, and by next Monday I trust to have her back. Really those are most kind people."

"And two pretty girls, I hear," added Algernon, after a pause. "Don't you think you could smuggle me in, mother ? It would while away an hour or two for me capitally before the business of the evening begins."

"Well, I hardly know if I could ask ; I feel to be so slightly acquainted with Madame d'Héricourt : she has a certain formality about her—no, not exactly that, but a certain sedateness, and lives, I understand, so completely out of the world."

"Yet she is half French ; quite French by education, is she not ? and evening is the time for visiting in France."

"I am sure I do not know what her ways are, or to what part of the world they belong, but they seem what I should call very savage and secluded. Her two girls are sweet creatures ; but Emma says they might have been brought up in the woods, as far as ideas are concerned. However, I will consult Emma. I am going there just now."

"Do, mother ; I really should like to see these children of nature and their severe duenna. We do not see many such specimens about, so it quite excites my curiosity. The circle will present an amusing contrast to the remainder of the evening, at any rate."

Mrs. Wyndham proceeded without delay on her errand. Madame d'Héricourt was not at home, and she communicated Algernon's wish to Emma.

Emma looked doubtful. "I hardly know why, Mama, but I fancy Madame d'Héricourt would rather not."

"Then I am sure I will not ask," rejoined her mother, with an angry toss of the head ; "I will not subject myself to a refusal. But really I should think my Algernon was good enough company for any one."

"Don't throw away your indignation on me, mammy ; it is not my fault if Madame d'Héricourt does not like strangers. I don't think anything juvenile ever crosses the threshold, with the exception, by the bye, of a grave sort of youth who has presented his prosaic countenance here once or twice of an evening, Gertrude says."

"If one is admitted, another may be," said Mrs. Wyndham. "I should be sorry to disappoint Algernon."

"He will find it dismally dull, I should expect. The girls are as mute as mackerel when anybody is by, and I should think he would soon have had enough of them Mama. However, if he has a fancy to come, I will tell you

how we might manage it without the possibility of a refusal. Madame d'Héricourt is out at present ; so, if you go home at once, Mama, I will just say you could not wait to see her, but wished to know whether you might bring your son this evening, and that I said I was sure she would not object. I will take care not to remember the message till too late for her to find an excuse. Algernon is certain not to want to come a second time."

Delighted with this stratagem, Mrs. Wyndham kissed her ingenious, if not ingenuous, daughter, reassumed her bonnet, and hastily left the house, for fear lest the return of the mistress should defeat so admirable a plot.

Evening is come ; the lamp is on the table in a subdued state, for it is a pity to stare the remainder of this soft early summer's day out of countenance with glaring candlelight. Madame d'Héricourt is seated at her work ; Gertrude is by her, learning a stitch ; Anne and Pauline are looking over some prints ; Emma is on the sofa, with no particular occupation ; but her *mind* is occupied : she is about to broach the subject of her brother's introduction to the family, and she feels a little nervous ; however, she can defer it no longer, for the carriage, with the individual himself, may arrive any moment ; an effort must be made, and she colours as she makes it, though she strives to speak with all imaginable ease.

"By the bye,"—what so disingenuous often as those 'by the byes' !—"By the bye, I ought really to have mentioned it sooner, but when Mama was here this morning she meant to have asked you if she might bring my brother Algernon this evening. He begged to have the pleasure of an introduction, and hoped you would not consider him an intruder. You are so kind, that I ventured to answer for you, but—but—" she was about to add that she had forgotten to give her mother's message, but the downright untruth was repugnant to her.

The loud, superabundant knock, which the hand of the London footman knows so well how to inflict upon a door, relieved her from the difficulty of framing not too false an apology, and left Madame d'Héricourt no opportunity for much reply; and, indeed, what could she do but civilly acquiesce, whatever her private wishes might have been?

Mrs. Wyndham is soon rustling into the room in a watered silk gown, which would almost have stood of itself without the support of her substantial figure. She is followed by her handsome son, upon whom she looks back with a mother's fond pride, as she introduces him with an apology for taking the liberty of bringing him, Emma having encouraged her, and so forth. Algernon, as we have seen, was a thorough man of the world; but he had an accommodating amiability, and a peculiar tact, which made him know the best manner to adopt in whatever company he found himself.

There really was little hypocrisy in this on his part; for, though he had a good deal of talent, he had very little distinctive character; he was also singularly sweet-tempered and obliging, and had the strongest dislike to ruffling, annoying, or shocking any one. If he respected nothing much, neither did he despise anything or anybody: "live and let live" might be said to be his motto; but, above all, he had much real consideration for women, old as well as young, and never failed to make himself respectfully agreeable to them, to whatever class they might belong. After his bow to the party in general, he at once seated himself by the mistress of the house, and for a good half-hour devoted himself to her; not as if from studied politeness, but with all the appearance of preference for his situation. He allowed Madame d'Héricourt at first to take the initiative as to topics, and then followed her lead most agreeably. He had an illustrative anecdote or pleasant comment at hand

upon almost any subject which might be started, for he was an acute superficial observer, and narrated well, giving the pith of a story with brevity, humour, and grace. Madame d'Héricourt was unaffectedly pleased with him ; and Anne and Pauline looked up from their prints occasionally to listen to the conversation, which was audible to them, from the circumstance that Gertrude was silent, and that Mrs. Wyndham and Emma were speaking in a whisper.

A knock at the door—no flourish now—but three distinct taps of impartial weight and equally impartial distances.

"Who can that be?" said Emma. "What a solemn knock!"

"Not solemn, but indicative of a steady character, I should say," observed Algernon. "Knocks are as characteristic as handwriting."

"Then all footmen must be alike, and so must all drawing and dancing masters," said Emma ; "for they each have a general style of knock distinguishing them."

"Those are *class* knocks," replied Algernon ; "in such case the individual disappears. The footman's knock expresses his sense of his mistress's importance ; that of the paid instructor simply acknowledges the humility of his profession."

"You are right, Mr. Wyndham,—about a steady character, at any rate," interposed Madame d'Héricourt. "I am pretty sure that it is our friend Mr. Rochfort, who sometimes calls of an evening."

The opening door confirmed the surmise. Emma turned her full flashing eyes towards the new-comer, and then fixed them on Anne. Miss Wyndham had little native delicacy or tact ; such as she possessed was from a mere acquired worldly sense of propriety ; while poor Anne, untutored in the ways of society, was instinctively sensitive to any departure from that true delicacy and politeness which

is grounded on charity. She felt the bold, inquisitive glance of Emma, and knowing its import, coloured deeply, and then coloured another deep blush at the thought of having coloured.

The entrance of an addition to the party had caused a slight movement, during which Algernon rose from his place, and Madame d'Héricourt introduced Mr. Rochfort to her new friends. Eustace was shy, and, though gentleman-like and self-possessed in his manners, he, unlike Algernon, appeared to least advantage when brought into contact with society. To use a common phrase, he retired into his shell on such occasions ; and that shell itself, to pursue the image, had not the graceful outline or showy colouring which serves to prepossess the eye when the dweller within sequesters himself from view. To drop the figure, Eustace was neither handsome nor plain, neither vulgar nor distinguished in appearance ; his expression of face was, however, sensible and intellectual, though it did not indicate intellect of a brilliant sort. He had a sound judgment and good temper, much self-control, and great simplicity and straightforwardness of character. Add to this, he was of a studious turn, and had solid abilities, but he had not a very lively imagination. In the gay world he would very probably have been called matter-of-fact and dull ; but, as we have the privilege of viewing him in closer intimacy, we will not allow ourselves to subscribe to this harsh opinion. It was the judgment, however, which Emma, and probably Algernon, formed at a glance. Possibly Mrs. Wyndham's opinion might have been guided or modified by some acquaintance with his expectations. A younger son, with his way to make in the world, and with an exterior so little striking, could hardly have escaped being designated in her colloquial style, as a "very dull piece of goods" ; while, on the other hand, had she known him to be what Emma would have called "his own Papa," she might have arrived at consider-

ing him positively "pleasing, with a very sensible and agreeable countenance." As she knew nothing about him, however, she surveyed him without taking the trouble of coming to any conclusion. Reflection was not the lady's province; it involved some trouble, not to be taken without an object—a peculiarity which perhaps often saved her from a little of her daughter Emma's censoriousness.

Algernon, as has been observed, had risen, and, as he did not resume his place by the mistress of the house, his mother, who was always chiefly occupied in catering for her son's comfort and satisfaction whenever he was present, seized the opportunity to take possession of the vacant seat, and so relieve him from any necessity which politeness might appear to impose upon him of resuming it; thus setting him free to seek conversation more congenial to his taste. Meanwhile Eustace had profited by the first empty chair; the awkwardness of finding himself unexpectedly among strangers, moving him to seek relief in a fixed position; for he did not possess Algernon's talent of touring gracefully about a room, addressing scraps of conversation to the component parts of the society, and had no ambition to cultivate it. The vacant chair happened to be next Anne, to whom he naturally addressed a word or two as he sat down. But Emma was still mercilessly on the watch, and Anne felt all the strong repugnance which a mind seldom disturbed experiences on such exceptional occasions as succeed in troubling its tranquillity. Again she coloured, half from vexation at the knowledge of what was passing in Emma's mind, half from annoyance at the wrong construction which she was aware that unrefined young lady was sure to put upon her blushes. Anne hardly recognized herself, so off her guard was she thrown; for her next feeling was a slight sense of provocation against the unoffending Eustace, and a determination that her own manner to him, at least, should silence Emma's disagreeable suspicions. Her

answer was accordingly rather short and dry, and she scarcely looked up from the prints with which she and Pauline were occupied, and which she continued to turn over mechanically.

"O, don't go so quick, Anne. I want to look at these longer," exclaimed her sister.

"Those are designs of the subjects on the windows of the Maria Hilf at Munich, if I am not mistaken," observed Algernon, who, in the course of his tour of the room, had come to a casual stand, as it were, behind Anne's chair.

"I hardly know what they are," she replied. "We are looking at them for the first time; they have been lent us"

"And that is the reason I don't like to hurry over them," interposed Pauline; "but there is no name; the margins have been cut off, to paste the prints in."

"A barbarous proceeding rather, is it not?" rejoined Algernon.

"Very tiresome," said Pauline; "but stop—here it is in pencil on the back: 'Maria Hilf, Munich'"; and little Pauline looked up with her eyes wide open at Algernon, as if he was a very conjuror—"How did you know?"

"For a very simple reason," replied Algernon, with his sweet, confidence-inviting smile, "because I have seen the originals."

"You have been at Munich, have you?" asked Anne timidly, for once in her life disposed to talk to a stranger, but rather from a desire *not* to talk to Eustace, than from any wish to enter into conversation with Algernon.

"I have spent a considerable time there," he rejoined, —Algernon had tried the diplomatic line, as I have said, at his first start in life—"and I often used to stroll out to the Maria Hilf, for it is in the suburbs, to admire again and again those exquisite painted windows. You have the outline here, but you can scarcely appreciate the beauty without the rich colouring, which has all the splendour of

reality, from being penetrated with glowing light instead of merely reflecting it."

"How beautiful they must be!" said Anne; "it is our Lady's life. How I should like to see them!"

"If you have a taste for painting, you would find much to gratify it in Munich."

"I do not think I have much taste for painting in general; but Mama takes us every year to the National Gallery and to the Exhibition."

"And from what symptom do you infer your want of taste?"

"That I only care for a very few of the paintings."

"Pardon me," rejoined Algernon, with a slight laugh, "perhaps that is rather a proof of good taste; it is discriminating, at any rate."

"Anne only cares for the sacred pictures," said Pauline; "that is the reason; and she does not always like *them*."

"Not if they do not come up to her ideal, I imagine. For instance, I could almost pronounce beforehand that Mdlle. d'Héricourt would prefer the Italian to the Flemish school."

"Now, how *did* you know that?" asked Pauline.

"I am getting the reputation of a conjuror rather cheaply, it seems. Well, upon this occasion I really cannot explain; only I am sure I am right—am I not, Mdlle. d'Héricourt?"

Anne looked up for the first time at him, and smiled assent.

"I must confess to the same rather exclusive taste," continued Algernon; "and, with all his genius, even Rubens, with his robust angels and well-fed saints, is a little repulsive to me sometimes."

"But I like landscapes too," added Pauline, whose mind was not very consecutive.

"I will continue to make guesses," said Algernon; "your sister thinks she can look at better landscapes with her own eyes; mere imitation has no charm for her. Painting

must embody something on which her mind's eye inwardly rests, and, if it does not come up to the beautiful conception, then it is a failure and disgusts."

Algernon knew how to be complimentary without paying a single open compliment ; he knew how to draw persons out, and put them in good humour with themselves. Anne, indeed, would have turned away from a compliment, but the appreciation of her tastes and sympathy with her feelings which this new acquaintance evinced, were far from disagreeable to her ; and withal Algernon had the talent of making people feel at their ease with him.

The conversation continued in this strain, and in a style to which she was unused, and which had therefore the additional charm of novelty. Eustace had very little light conversation at his command ; he would have been well qualified, however, to give an opinion on any subject of interest, and one better worth having, and to which he had a more genuine claim than the gay stranger possibly had to his ; but for some unaccountable reason—perhaps the reader will say not entirely unaccountable—he had buried his head, and his attention apparently, in a book. No one addressed a word to him, and he addressed not a word to any one, until Madame d'Héricourt spoke to him, when he rose with great readiness to join her. A few minutes after, the agreeable intruder was occupying his place, and, as it may be inferred, not reading the abandoned volume.

CHAPTER IX.

PRUDENCE OUT-MANŒUVRED.

"How did you like the ball last night?" said Mrs. Wyndham to her son, who had lounged in about luncheon-time.

"Bored," was the laconic reply.

"I thought it would be dull; Lady Susan Finch's the same night was sure to spoil it. You ought to know *her*, Algernon."

"I do know her; at least I had an invitation, and looked in there too; but it was a dreadful squeeze, and I was not in a humour to take any delight in an oven heated by human beings, so I went home to bed."

"Yet a ball is always dull unless it is a *little* crowded," replied Mrs. Wyndham.

"That is one of your English fancies, mother."

"Well, it may be a fancy, but so it is; people think a thin room dull, and that is sure to make it dull."

"Exactly so," rejoined her son; "rooms are, comparatively speaking, small in England, so it is supposed they ought to overflow if you are the fashion; and people think much more about whether they are considered fashionable, whether they are reckoned this or that, than of the real purposes of society."

"But what *are* the real purposes of society?" asked Mrs. Wyndham, with some *naïveté*.

"I suppose to please ears and eyes, and mind, if you have one," replied Algernon; "but I am sure neither body nor mind can be entertained in a stove of human flesh. They understand such things much better on the Continent."

"Very likely," said the acquiescent mama, who almost always deferred to her son's judgment.

"Do you know, mother," resumed this arbiter of good taste, after a moment's silence, "I saw no one last night to compare to your two children of nature. There is a piquant simplicity about them both, and the elder is one of the prettiest girls I ever saw."

"Yes, indeed ; and a little more intercourse with society would no doubt supply what she lacks, and convert the raw material into a finished article."

The reminiscences of the linendraper's shop seemed to linger in Mrs. Wyndham's imagination.

"Raw material !" ejaculated Algernon, who was in rather a sentimental vein this morning. "I don't know what you mean by 'raw.' I would not have that soft bloom brushed off her cheek by a London season for anything : it would spoil her."

"But she would gain air and manner, and have something more to say for herself ; and this would be well worth the loss of a shade or two of carmine. See how Emma has fined down since she came out. She was too rosy. Such bursting health reminds one of a dairy-maid, and looks rustic and vulgar."

"There is nothing of rusticity, vulgarity, or dairy-maid complexion about Anne d'Héricourt, at any rate," rejoined Algernon ; "and, making abstraction of vulgarity, in my humble opinion a little superfluous health and genuine nature would not be unacceptable occasionally, if it were but for the novelty of the thing. However, it was not the bloom of the cheek I was speaking of only, but the fresh down and bloom of modesty, which your acclimated ladies of fashion either put into their pockets or relegate to their bosoms, but certainly do not wear on their faces. I saw not one with that same charming adjunct at those two human hothouses."

"What ! not one modest girl ? Really, Algernon, you are too severe."

"I don't say that. They might all be modest enough negatively,—not the reverse of modest, I mean, and that would be a large and charitable allowance; but modesty, as a positive quality, no young lady who has gone through a London season possesses: so say I; at least, if she possesses it, she takes precious good care to keep it out of sight."

"Bashfulness wears off, of course."

"Bashfulness is the bloom of modesty," replied her son. "Mind, I don't mean awkwardness."

Algernon, as has been observed, had a certain genuine respect for women, and a consequent instinctive appreciation of what was becoming in them; it was one of the best points about him—this uncorrupted taste.

"If you mean," he continued, after a moment's pause on either side, "that I am not amused with your off-hand girls, who have disposed of their superfluous bashfulness, and do not find them very pleasant company for an idle hour, you are mistaken; of course, I do; every thing in its place—Anne d'Héricourt, in her quiet circle, with her simple demi-toilette, interesting herself about madonnas, and interesting me very much about her sweet self; and Emma and her like, in the ball-room, garlanded with roses, and whirling in the dance like so many mad Bacchantes; only if I am to fall in love and choose a wife, it would not be a Bacchante."

"But would be Anne d'Héricourt," added Mrs. Wyndham, looking up with some astonishment, and a little inquiry in her physiognomy.

"Come, mother, you go so fast. It is not quite so serious yet."

"Yet!"

"Yet," echoed Algernon. "I will not answer for myself if I see much more of that 'maiden with the downward eyelids pure.'"

Mrs. Wyndham was silent a moment, and then resumed. "Well, Algernon, I don't think I will refuse my consent: there is no brother; they must have tolerable fortunes, and are of good family; and they are well-brought-up girls, as you say." This seemed to come as an after-thought.

"Always the same, mother; true to the practical view," said Algernon, laughing, as he rose. "Now I am off to call on Madame d'Héricourt, and angle for an invitation. Do you think I shall succeed?"

"You ought to have no difficulty. But I suspect that prudent mother,—for she *is* prudent, notwithstanding all her piety—has other views, and will be afraid of you. Emma told me last night in a whisper that Mr. Rochfort was an only son, and that he is constantly there; and she is quite sure it is to be a match; that is, that the *mother* intends it."

"What! that dull book-worm of a chap? I am not much afraid of him. She did not look at him."

"But he did look at *you*, once,—I observed him,—and then never took his eyes off his book. After what Emma told me I set him down as jealous; and, if I am not much mistaken, Madame d'Héricourt noticed his discontent. Depend on it, she will not ask you."

"We shall see," replied her son, with the confident smile of one who seldom fails.

And he seldom *did* fail in similar undertakings; neither was this occasion an exception. Madame d'Héricourt had really liked the young man upon the superficial acquaintance of one evening; but, true to her system of avoiding all intimacy when not sure of the character of the person with whom she was casually associated, it was from no forgetfulness, as Algernon perhaps imagined, that she had not expressed any wish for a repetition of the visit; neither would that prepossessing individual have attained

his object by his morning call, had he not been gifted with consummate assurance, which he knew how to use without betraying it.

The reader may perhaps be curious to learn how the cautious mother was circumvented. It was very simply done. After a moderately lengthened visit, which was passed *tête-à-tête* with Madame d'Héricourt, and during which Algernon made himself very agreeable, taking care to say nothing which could be construed into a hint for a fresh invitation, such as any expression of having spent a pleasant evening, or the like—well aware that, if that device failed, he would have precluded himself, according to all the rules of good taste, from his last resource—he rose to go, and drew the reserved arrow from his quiver.

Putting on one of his sweetest and most natural of smiles as he pressed the proffered hand at parting, "Will you think me very impudent," he said, "if I ask you, Madame d'Héricourt, to take compassion on my solitude, particularly as you are the cause of it, by carrying off my constant companion, my 'mama,' and allow me to join your family party again?"

Who could refuse a direct appeal for hospitality? It might be impudent enough, but the petitioner did not look impudent, neither did Madame d'Héricourt so interpret the request, though, truth to say, it was with some inward reluctance she replied in the affirmative. Courtesy, however, forbade its manifestation, and there was something about Algernon's manner so unaffected, and withal so winning, that she could not, if she would, have received his request with any chilliness of demeanour. Her visitor seized the happy moment, and, thanking her cordially for having relieved him from his forlorn situation, in terms which showed that he had been pleased to construe the invitation as general for the remainder of the week, he departed, leaving Madame d'Héricourt a little bewildered and annoyed at having been

surprised into an act diametrically opposed to her principles and practice.

And so Algernon Wyndham came every evening with his mother, and every evening deepened the impression which Anne had made at first sight. He was cautious however, not to show it openly. He talked to Pauline fully as much, perhaps more than to her sister ; he could have his little jokes with "the child," as he playfully affected to call her ; he petted Tommy, and even Tommy, known to be fastidious, liked him, and condescended to sit on his knee. The young man placed himself at once, whether Madame d'Héricourt would or not, in the position of a friend of the family, but was scrupulous to repay her for the imposition of himself in that capacity, by bestowing upon her individually a large proportion of his pleasant, cheerful, and varied conversation. To Anne he spoke least, but he knew the art of conveying the persuasion of being liked to the person addressed, while veiling it from those around. There was a gentle reverence and sweetness in his manner to her, a deference, a hanging upon her reply, an unfailing notice and appreciation of it, which told its own tale. Eustace never came again that week, and Anne did not miss him.

Saturday evening arrived at last, and, with it, a leave-taking on the part of Mrs. Wyndham and her fascinating son, himself now fascinated more than he almost cared to own. On Monday Emma was restored to the paternal mansion. The day was closing in, and the lamps in the street were beginning to twinkle, when Pauline, who was gazing out of the window, with a little, just a little, of the unstrung feeling about her merry heart which a lull after some unusual excitement is apt to produce, remarked,—"We shall seem quite alone this evening."

To which Anne, who was profiting by the lingering light to finish some book upon which she was engaged, and was

leaning in the embrasure of the same window, replied, "We *shall* be alone."

"Dear Annie, I know that; but I mean we shall seem so very quiet, so very few."

"I do not think we shall be quite alone, though, Pauline," interposed her mother. "I saw Eustace this morning, and he talked of coming."

"Oh! Mr. Rochfort!" said Pauline, with a sort of discontented sigh, "he is all very well in his way, of course; but he is not near so amusing as Mr. Wyndham; indeed, he is not at all amusing. I like Mr. Wyndham so much better. Don't you, Annie?"

Anne looked up from her book, and the colour rose to her cheek. "Like him better, Pauline? I cannot very well compare the two."

The reply was ambiguous, but Madame d'Héricourt took it up in a sense which possibly was not its precise meaning.

"Pauline, your sister says very truly. How can you compare an acquaintance of a few days' standing with a comparatively old friend? Besides, I am sorry to hear you make any one's amusing powers the measure of your liking."

"But it is not that only, Mama," said Pauline, reddening. "I don't know why, but I *do* like him best. Anne, don't you remember Emma saying there are some persons that you know in a minute you shall like? I think she called it freemasonry."

"My dear child," said Madame d'Héricourt, "such conversation is very nonsensical and foolish. Every one knows that some people are more pleasing to our taste than others, particularly at first sight; but to say we like them better before we can possibly judge of their worth is rash and silly. Besides, the less we compare the better. Your sister made you a very good answer."

But Anne was remarkably true; she was pained at being

supposed to have meant what in reality she did not mean ; for her reply had been rather designed as an evasion than intended for a moral observation. "I don't think, Mama," she said, "that I meant anything so good or sensible as you fancy. Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Rochfort are very unlike and . . . and, as Pauline says, Mr. Wyndham is more pleasing ; but, of course, we know Mr. Rochfort's worth and esteem him greatly ; and we know little about the other, though I am sure he is good and amiable too, for his sisters are very fond of him." Anne's heart beat as she spoke and her voice revealed a little emotion.

"Well, my dear, we had best drop the conversation at present, for I hear Mr. Rochfort on the stairs."

The conversation was not resumed, but it left Madame d'Héricourt with a slight fear that Pauline had not profited by her short association with the gay votary of the world, and the uncomfortable suspicion that Anne *did* like Algernon Wyndham better than Eustace Rochfort. But how much ?



CHAPTER X.

AN UNWELCOME ANNOUNCEMENT.

"Who is your correspondent, Mama ?" asked Emma of her mother at the breakfast-table one morning soon after her return.

Mrs. Wyndham made no immediate reply, but, after glancing at the signature and the date in an uneasy sort of way, she recommenced reading her letter, muttered something

inaudible, shuffled the paper about in her hand, as if puzzled and embarrassed, and was finally about to transfer it to her pocket.

"But you don't tell me, Mama, whom your letter is from," reiterated Emma impatiently; "and you do not seem to like its contents."

Mrs. Wyndham opened her letter again, and, giving the pages another cursory survey, said, half to herself, half to Emma, in that species of resolute voice which betokens latent irresolution, "No, I really cannot, it would not do at all; how very annoying!"

"What is annoying, Mama? You are so tiresome; I am dying of curiosity."

"Your uncle John is coming over."

"And has written to say so?"

"And has written to say so," repeated Mrs. Wyndham in an absent voice, still conning the unwelcome letter.

"What is that to us, Mama? I suppose he is not coming here."

"But he *wants* to come here; that is the very thing he writes about."

"For a day, I suppose; on his way into Warwickshire? Well, it is a bore, but we must say 'not at home' to our visitors while he is with us, and keep him out of sight as well as we can."

"He wants to be in town for a fortnight, child; don't talk nonsense," replied Mrs. Wyndham, rendered cross by her embarrassment; "it is about business, and two front teeth he wants to get, and says if we have not room for him, or if he is likely to be an inconvenience, he will go to an hotel."

"For a fortnight!" exclaimed Emma, with a face of blank dismay.

"Lord love him!" ejaculated John Sanders's sister, whose ingrained vulgarity was not always quite effaced by

the fashionable polish which had been superinduced ; " if he would not be worse than an inconvenience ! "

" I do not remember ever seeing Uncle John," said Gertrude. " Is he so very disagreeable ? "

" But I do," said Emma. " He had a broad face, called me, I remember, a ' little lass ' ; for I know I made believe that I thought he said a ' little ass,' and he left out his h's,—I recollect observing that very well."

Mrs. Wyndham sighed at the mention of the h's. " No, it would never do," she repeated ; " I am sure I could not stand it. He cannot come ; and really I do not know where we could put him."

There is the dressing-room on the ground-floor," suggested Gertrude ; " and I am sure Papa would not mind using the slip up-stairs for so short a time."

" My dear Gertrude," said Emma, " don't you see that Mama wants to make it difficult to house Uncle John, and you are trying to make it easy ? "

" There is no occasion to mention the dressing-room to him, of course," said Mrs. Wyndham hesitating ; " we have no regular spare room."

" But even if he goes to an hotel, he will expect to be asked, and be in and out, I fear ; and that will be nearly as bad," said Emma.

" No, he would not," replied Mrs. Wyndham ; " you do not know my brother John ; he is very independent, and perhaps will suspect we don't care to have him, or we would stretch a point. That would make me prefer to find some other excuse ; if we could have been going out of town for a few days——"

" Oh, Mama, in the very thick of the season ! and then we cannot—there's our party next week."

" He does not talk of coming for another ten days ; and I do not think we have many invitations for the week which follows."

"But we have one or two I should be very sorry to miss," said Emma; "and if you cannot keep the thing up it is worth nothing;" and Emma looked quite pettish.

"Oh, I forgot, too, your father wishes to give a dinner at the end of next week, and has already asked Sir Philip Eagle, and several of that set. We could not go before Monday week. I fear John would have arrived sooner. Dear me! what shall I do? So very unsuitable!"

"What is bringing him over?" rejoined Emma. "I thought he was settled in Sicily, making and selling wines for the rest of his natural life."

"Will it not seem very unkind to refuse him, or get out of the way?" asked Gertrude.

"He is giving up part of his business," said Mrs. Wyndham, not noticing her younger daughter's remark; "from something he says,"—and she referred to the document—"I conclude he has secured a competence now. But stay: he says something about Teresa being out of health, and left behind. That is his daughter; oh, yes, 'my only child.'"

"Better read it through straight, Mama, and then we shall know all about it. Perhaps he is a rich man now, and has forsworn economy, including that of his h's."

Mrs. Wyndham shook her head: "John may have grown rich, but he will never take any polish. John Sanders is John Sanders still, you may depend upon it. He had a good heart, I must say, but was always as obstinate as a pig, and looked like a grazier; and, what was worse, he prided himself on it; so there were no hopes of his mending. He had a sort of notion of town ways not suiting him, and honest simplicity being the thing for him."

"But he might drop his vulgarity without playing the fine gentleman," said Emma; "but come, Mama, the letter."

"My dear sister, we have not met for a great many years

now ; and, as I never hear from you or of you except when your husband writes about the Marsala, all I know for certain, or, at least, conclude, is that you were alive last February : so I hope you are so still, and hearty and well into the bargain, which I am not just now—thank God for all His mercies——’ ”

“ How very comically that comes in, Mama ! ” said Emma.

“ Don’t interrupt me ; that belongs to the next sentence, I suppose ; do let me go on with the letter. ‘ I am engaged in winding up my foreign business, as I have enough to live on now, and my only child, if she lives, dear soul, wishes to go into religion ; and what is enough for me is enough for her, anyhow. Teresa is very delicate, and I often fear she has the seeds of her dear departed mother’s complaint. God’s will be done. So I leave her with her aunts, and come over *solo*. My business will keep me in town for a fortnight ; besides, my teeth are in very rum order,—two of my front rank gone, which I find so uncomfortable that I must get the gap filled up. If you and your husband can receive me without putting yourselves out of the way, I shall be glad to put up at your hotel in preference to any other. Till I know your pleasure I would not arrange otherwise, as, after so long absence, you might think me unkind if I did not make the offer.’ ”

“ The offer ! Really one would think he did it to oblige us,” interposed Emma.

“ Poor John ! ” said Mrs. Wyndham, in rather a relenting voice ; “ it is his way of expressing himself : ‘ if I did not make the offer. But do just as you like, and don’t let me interfere with any of your gay doings ; a bed in an attic, if you will, and my knife and fork, is all I want, and a welcome. The last is indispensable, so don’t say “ Yes ” if you would rather say “ No. ” My love to Wyndham and

the girls. Direct to me, "Hôtel Meurice," at Paris. Your affectionate brother,—John Sanders."

"It is a vulgar production, Mama."

"Really, Emma, you are very critical. What is there so vulgar, after all?" said Gertrude.

"He *is* vulgar; there is no mincing the matter," replied Mrs. Wyndham, laying down the letter, and musing; "but then—— but then, he is my brother;" and she seemed to have fallen on some train of thought. The charitable reader may suppose that memory had wandered back to former days, when the whole Sanders family, herself included, jostled on together, in happy ignorance of London polish, or the arbitrary laws which regulate the enunciation of aspirates; while the suspicious reader may opine that her cogitations rather concerned the future, and that it had just struck her that a well-to-do uncle in indifferent health, with a consumptive daughter, was not to be lightly offended.

"Indeed, Mama, I quite think as you do," said Gertrude; "and it would seem very unkind to refuse him."

"Do hold your tongue, Gertrude," said Emma impatiently; "I think Mama is the best judge in such a case."

"Of course I am," said Mrs. Wyndham, jumping at the admission, for she had inwardly arrived at a conclusion; "and the more I consider this letter, the more convinced I am that, unless we could have made some decent excuse to be out of town, I must accept."

"Oh dear, Mama!" exclaimed Emma, with a look of consternation at the unexpected resolve.

"What *can* I do?" replied her mother; "you objected yourself, Emma, to going out of town; I have no alternative, you see."

Emma saw that she had deprived herself of a right to grumble; but she had her reasons for being reluctant to leave London, which weighed more powerfully with her

even than the bugbear of Uncle John's vulgarity, so that she was not disposed to retract her opposition to a move at this juncture.

"We must make the best of it," continued Mrs. Wyndham, "and only hope he will not arrive before Saturday week. I should die of him with that supercilious Sir Philip Eagle sitting by."

"You had better mention the dinner party, and suggest his coming the next day or Monday."

"No, Emma; he would think at once that I did not want him. Best say nothing. If we do it, let us do it handsomely;" and so Mrs. Wyndham swallowed her last mouthful of an uncomfortable breakfast, and hurried off to speak to her husband, who had not emerged from his dressing-room.

"Oh, by all means, my dear; of course, write, and say he is most welcome," replied Mr. Wyndham, who was at that moment sitting in a buff dressing-gown, in all the undignified predicament of a chin in a lather of soap, and engaged in the critical act of shaving his upper lip.

"You see, I cannot well help it," replied his wife apologetically; "and really it might be injudicious to decline him; he is well off, and if this poor thing died,—of course. I trust she may be spared to him, but still one must think of one's own,—who knows? in that case, perhaps he might make our Algernon his heir. Who so suitable of all his nephews and nieces?"

"Algernon will get little enough from me," replied the papa, who was conscious of the encumbrance of a good deal of debt on a moderate fortune; "and he is an idle fellow: so if he is ever to be a rich man, it must be by tumbling into a property in some such way. However, no matter about that. John Sanders is an honest, good fellow, and heartily welcome."

Mr. Wyndham had apparently forgotten his deficiencies,

or was not so susceptible on such points as his wife and daughters ; not that he was by any means indifferent to the world's opinion, but his self-love was more interested in the appointments of his table, and the whole turn-out of his establishment, than in the personal polish or fashion of his connections. "But where will you put him, Beatrice?" he said.

Oh, that is another thing. You know we have no regular spare room ; the attic is wanted, and indeed is full of boxes ; and I never put a man up there. There is nothing for it but to let him have this room, and for you to use the slip ; so I thought at first it would never do."

"Well, let that be ; I don't mind using the slip at this time of year, when it is warm and I don't want a fire. When did he say that he comes?"

"Not for ten days certainly—I *hope* after the dinner party. He would be quite out of place. My brother, as you know, is . . . very" . . . Mrs. Wyndham would have added "vulgar," but some sense of personal solidarity with the stock from which she came restrained her in her husband's presence, and she substituted the word "homely." "Sir Philip Eagle would wonder whom in the world we had asked to meet him."

"Sir Philip will not care a straw who sits at the table, so long as there is something good to the taste, and in good taste upon it," replied Mr. Wyndham. "And now I think of it, my love," he added in a deprecating tone, as he carefully wiped his razor, "do see about the dinner. I should be quite ashamed if Tyrell sent us up, for instance, a dish of gigantic patties, like those she favoured us with the other day. I can fancy Eagle fixing his glass in his eye, and his eye on the patties, and asking whether they were pork pies ; he thought he remembered seeing some such dish in the steward's room at his grandfather's when he was a boy."

"It was not Tyrell," replied his wife, "who made those

patties. As we were quite alone, she had asked to go out. I fancy she wanted to go to church. Mary was the performer."

"And a very bad one. If Tyrell cannot teach her to do better, the girl must go. But I don't think Tyrell herself is any great hand."

"She is not a bad cook,—I should say."

"Well—not that exactly. What she does eats better than it looks. It is air and lightness that are wanting; the eye ought to be pleased as well as the palate. Did you notice the dinner at Eagle's the other day?"

"Yes, and I should have said there was too little; it was so very unsubstantial, and particularly the second course."

"Now that is just your mistake, my love. You know how much I think of your taste, but you really are wrong about that. Heavy profusion is not the fashion now. Dinners have come to be so late that they approach more to the character of suppers. People eat solid luncheons, and the evening appetite is not so gross; it should be humoured, tickled, and tempted. The delicate concluding meal ought to present an agreeable variety, not a bewildering one, but a select variety of light and tasteful dishes. We seek for a relish at that hour rather than sheer nourishment. But any how, quantity never makes up to the taste for deficient quality. Eagle told me that when he and Graham were cruising in the Mediterranean, in that beautiful yacht of his, the 'Plover,' his French cook never sent them up more than two dishes; but he could trust his inexhaustible talent—*two dishes*, but then, to use his expression, they were dishes which might have been set before the Olympian gods."

"Well, we must do our best. We cannot rival Sir Philip's exquisite French cookery, of course; but if we fail to delight him," answered Mrs. Wyndham, who never tried

her husband's temper by an argument, "we must hope at least not to disgust him, and disarm criticism, at any rate."

"Just so, my dear ; that is quite what I mean."

Yes, Mrs. Wyndham knew what he meant ; but she knew, too, that even if Tyrell could have realized the *beau idéal* in Mr. Wyndham's mind, a *recherché* dinner is far more costly than a simply plentiful one ; but what could she say ? If her husband tolerated her evening party, in which he took no pleasure, she could not reasonably object to his dinners on the score of expense. And so she withdrew to make her morning meditation on two points :— 1st. How to dress a dinner, with the help of a cook at 16 guineas wages, and a kitchen-maid at £10, which should content an epicure who gave £50—some said £100—to the principal in his kitchen, and wages in due proportion to the assistant. 2nd point. If this was impossible, how to reconcile the calling in of some more accomplished hand on the occasion, and the outlay which this would involve, with the imperative claims of economy. At this edifying occupation, and without at present inquiring with what resolution the whole process terminated, we will leave the not very happy mistress of the family, and will descend to take a peep at the lower regions.



CHAPTER XI.

CHANGES IN THE ADMINISTRATION.

SINCE our last visit to the kitchen, which it is to be hoped the reader has not quite forgotten, there has been a fresh domestic arrangement. It was consequent upon Mrs. Roper's decided declaration that she could not without

assistance continue acting as lady's maid to both Mrs. Wyndham and her daughters, a post which involved, not attendance only, but much dress-making. Either the ball-dresses must all be given out to be made, or she must be accommodated with an additional pair of hands. Now that Miss Gertrude had come out also, it really was more than she could do with either satisfaction to her employers or regard to her own health. Mrs. Wyndham had been much perplexed by this declaration of her mistress of the robes. On the one hand she had a vision of fashionable dress-makers' bills, on the other the prospect of the expense of another mouth added to the household, not to speak of twelve or fourteen pounds a year more in wages. Roper was too clever a servant to be parted with readily ; besides, it was not very clear but that a substitute might not make the same stipulations, which, after all, were not unreasonable, but which Mrs. Wyndham regarded more from the point of view of their inconvenience than of their justice, and was ill-humoured accordingly for a whole morning, until an expedient suggested itself, or, rather, was suggested by Emma, jumped at by Mrs. Wyndham, and acquiesced in by Roper.

Rachel, the housemaid, did not like her place ; she had taken it into her silly head that she was born for something better. That same silly head was perched upon a long white neck, of which she was very proud, and was adorned with a very thick crop of yellowish hair, golden or auburn, of course, to the possessor. Upon the top, or, rather, the back, of this burnished wig figured generally a circular piece of net, with its lace border, about the size of a small saucer ; an appendage which, it appears, is still dignified with the name of a cap. Oh ! changed are the days since housemaids cleaned grates with caps on their heads which possessed an honest title to the name, caps which covered their ears, and with their hair in old newspaper papillotes, to

keep the dust and ashes out of it. The wonder then was when the hair burst the bud and came forth to view ; now the wonder may rather be when time is found to clean out the sweepings of the floor and hearth. Rachel was not pretty, but she thought or hoped she was ; and who so vain as those who are in a fever of hopes and fears on the subject ? Anyhow she was convinced that she was of a very *genteel* appearance, an appearance preposterously unsuitable to her calling, and pointing to a higher vocation. Add to this, great facility with her needle, and a back which ached with carrying up coals and hot-water cans to the sublime regions of a London house, and we need not wonder that Rachel desired to exchange the broom for the needle. For some time past she had been ingratiating herself with Mrs. Roper by peculiar attention to her little wants, and by occasionally helping her with a press of work ; borrowing for this purpose an hour from sleep at the night end, for which she made up, it is true, at the morning beginning, and getting over her housemaid's work in a hurried, slovenly way. But the household rose late, with the exception of Tyrell, and, thanks to Tyrell, the reluctant Mary ; so all got on pretty well, and not much complaint was made.

Another piece of diplomacy of the aspiring housemaid, who was possessed of that low worldly prudence which often accompanies a scanty proportion of higher gifts, was to pay her court to Miss Wyndham, whose predominant influence she was sharp enough to perceive ; but this was a delicate task : Emma was haughty, and not apt to condescend to her inferiors ; indeed, with the exception of Roper, who had lived a good many years in the family, and whose post gave her an advantage not enjoyed by others, she seldom addressed any of the servants, except to signify her desires. To her they seemed to be so many animated things rather than persons, and there was something in her very

looks and manner which betrayed her want of sympathy with them as a class, and discouraged any approach. But every faulty person who exercises no self-restraint, particularly if not possessing very strong common sense, is accessible in some way, and can be flattered, cajoled, led, or driven, as the case may be, so that only the proper method be pursued. Rachel probably was not competent to make this reflection, but she instinctively acted on it. Emma was very vain, and her vanity was of a greedy character; no one's admiration came amiss, and, in spite of her haughtiness, scarcely any one could be so insignificant but that his or her dispraise would have been offensive. The wily Rachel, not daring to offer flattery direct, which might have been unacceptable to one so "high" as Miss Wyndham, made Roper the confidante of her extravagant admiration, in the hopes that it might find its way to the proper quarter. Roper, as we have seen, was a privileged person; she was too necessary to Emma, and ministered too closely to her personal embellishment, to fall under the general law; nay, the barrier once broken down, Emma, who, notwithstanding, a selfish and overweening opinion of her own claims on the respect and homage of inferiors, was arrogant rather than proud (in the more refined sense of the term), allowed and even encouraged familiarity where a little more reserve would have been becoming. To Roper she talked much, and she talked of herself; she betrayed herself; she was confidential on personal topics. It is pleasant, perhaps, to be able to be completely off one's guard with one person, and yet forfeit apparently neither commendation nor a certain respect. For the good word and the admiring eye of her equals she had, if not to toil, at least to lay herself out and practise some restraint; but their respective positions rendered it unnecessary to make any such expenditure of trouble in the case of her attendant, who, truth to say, thought Miss Emma, with all

her faults, a very fine young lady, and really preferred her to her milder sister, who, if she gave less trouble, was too indifferent about her clothes, and too uninterested about common things, to please the talkative lady's maid.

No one, it is said, is a hero to his valet-de-chambre : perhaps this is not altogether and unreservedly true ; for it is remarkable how much value and admiration personal attendants will often entertain for masters and mistresses who daily and hourly, one would have thought, made themselves obnoxious to their censure, and let themselves down in their eyes by their gross imperfections. One condition alone appears to be necessary, that the servant should have reason to believe himself or herself of some esteem in the eyes of the employer ; into the philosophy of which fact I will not trouble my readers by inquiring. Suffice it to say, that Roper could venture to compliment and retail compliments ; and Rachel's " Law ! how handsome Miss Wyndham *did* look in her pink silk last night ; she looked like a queen every inch of her, and I said so to James," and so forth, found its way to the young lady's ear, and, though carelessly laughed at, was not altogether despised. Vanity can graze on coarse food as well as relish a dainty. Then Rachel looked very scrupulously after Miss Wyndham's little personal wants, and they were many. It takes a great deal to make some people comfortable, or think they are so,—people, I mean, who can command comforts ; it is curious how numerous these can be made, and how painfully the absence of any one item is felt, more perhaps because it is considered indispensable than from any real suffering involved ; for, as it has been truly remarked, " Our feelings are far more guided by the judgments we form than we are ourselves aware."

These preliminary measures paved the way for Rachel's promotion, when Mrs. Roper's smouldering discontent led to the declaration just mentioned. Emma suggested that

the girl should dress and wait upon her and Gertrude, and help Roper with her needle. There was but one difficulty : who was to do Rachel's work ? The scrubbing portion must be thrown, of course, on some one else. The hands which were to wait on ladies and finger their finery must not begrime themselves with cleaning grates ; besides, the want of time was an insurmountable objection.

"I am sure that lazy Mary has very little to do, Mama," said Emma. "I suspect Tyrell does almost all the cooking ; at least what she does *not* do she has to look after, which gives her quite as much trouble. Mary can wash the things up, and help a bit, and yet have plenty of time to manage the rough housework, I am sure."

"But, Emma, she was not engaged to do it."

"No, but if she does not like the transfer, she can go. She is no great treasure, after all. She has got a lymphatic look about her, and, I have a notion, will never answer."

"A what, Emma ? a nymph-like look, did you say ? Why she is as thick as a mile-stone."

Emma laughed, but did not think it worth while to attempt an explanation.

"And then, you see," resumed Mrs. Wyndham, "Tyrell will have, or seem to have, more to do."

"Not more than she used to have."

"No, but then I engaged the kitchen-maid just because she *had* too much to do, particularly during the season, when your father likes frequent dinner-parties."

"Tell her, then, you will get her help when she requires it. There is the coachman's wife, who would be glad to come in at any time."

Accordingly this was agreed upon : Tyrell was to have assistance when there was a dinner-party.

This plan, of course, while it relieved Mrs. Roper, threw an additional burden on Tyrell, who never complained, and who was on that account the less considered by the

mother and daughter, who specially lacked generosity and belonged to that objectionable class of persons who take what they can get.

And now to what class of persons is the "lymphatic" Mary to be referred? I fear she belongs to the denomination which may be described as that of "Can't help it." No, Mrs. Tyrell, you will never make much of Mary, either physically, intellectually, or religiously. She is not a bad girl—quite the reverse; but she lacks a spring in her system to make the good active and progressive. She acts from the impulse furnished by others; when the motive forcethus received is exhausted, she looks round, finds herself changed, for she is no longer impelled, and so she sits still. She has no idea of drawing on herself; the will seems to be becalmed like a sailing-vessel when the wind goes down; it depends upon the breeze, and has no locomotion of its own. She cannot even rise to the *conception* of free action. Not to be disposed to do a thing is with her not to be able; but as she is a well-intentioned girl, and gentle and docile with those who are kind to her, she responds to good advice and follows it awhile; the effect, however, does not last. Her understanding is not bad, but she has very little strength of character, and will probably never attain to anything above mediocrity. High sanctity seems further out of the reach of such persons than of the most faulty; they may save their souls, but, as far as we have the means of judging, their range will be always low. Mrs. Tyrell had begun to perceive these radical deficiencies in the poor girl, but she was none the less the continual object of her kind solicitude; and she made many allowances for her on the score of health, with which the heat of a London kitchen and the want of solar light decidedly disagreed. If this new arrangement, therefore, threw more work on the uncomplaining Tyrell, she consoled herself with the hope that it might benefit Mary's health

by varying her avocations and giving them a more active sphere. Mary, however, was extremely dissatisfied ; any change is disagreeable to a slothful nature, and specially a change which involves more active exertion, even if it imposes no larger amount of work.

"Oh, dear ! how tired I am of this up and down, backwards and forwards, sort of work !" she exclaimed partly to herself, partly to Mrs. Tyrell, cleaning the top of a coffee-pot the while as if she had a spite against it.

"Do you mean that it is tiring," said Mrs. Tyrell, "or only that you are tired of it?"

"Oh, it is worse than tiring, it is tiresome. Mrs. Roper has more wants than Missis. Here has been the bell jingling for me twice within a quarter of an hour."

"Don't you see, Mary, you have strained the lid of that coffee-pot? It will not quite close now."

"That's with cleaning; the grits get in the hinge. It can't be helped."

"It *can* be helped with taking pains. If you had applied half the strength and twice the care, you could have avoided it. I assure you, Mary, banging about and handling things roughly is one form of sloth. Minute exertions call for self-restraint, and so require a double kind of effort, besides the attention. Sloth would rather blunder violently through its work without thought or check."

Mary sighed: "How ever is one to do work well when one is called away every minute?"

"Yet we *must* do it as well as we can, or we displease Him whom we serve, or ought to be serving. But, my dear girl, don't you see that you make half your trouble to yourself by dwelling on the past and anticipating the future? You had to run upstairs twice in a quarter of an hour; the second time you were annoyed, not so much from fatigue, I imagine, as because you recollected you had been obliged to go once before; and now you are getting

through your business in a hurried, discontented way because you *think* you will be rung for again. I wish you would think less and think more—think of what you are doing and of the God you are doing it for. He has graciously discharged you of the rest. After all, every minute we have belongs to God; we can give Him no more; we ought to give Him no less. Once fix this firmly in your mind and you will not complain. Cannot you let Him choose your employment for you?"

"But one must be as good as a dead body not to care what it is," resumed Mary, who was in the contentious humour of irritated sloth.

"A dead body: you could not have found a better comparison. What are we here for but to put ourselves to death? What do you think all those expressions in the Holy Scriptures about the old man dying, and our being buried with Christ, mean?"

"Our sins, to be sure. I know we must die to sin. I wouldn't commit a sin for anything. I am not a heathen."

"It means," continued Mrs. Tyrell, not noticing the ill-humour, "that body in which sin dwells and has its fortress, our natural man; we must die to our own nature, its desires, its repugnances, its loves, its fears, its enjoyments; and, Mary, you know, if we do not accomplish this work here, but carry our dross away with us——"

"We shall go to Purgatory, I know," said Mary, looking a little grave. "I am sure I don't expect to escape Purgatory."

"Few can hope that," replied her companion, "and saints even, who went straight to glory, have not reckoned upon doing so; but I was not so much alluding to the suffering of Purgatory as to our having to suffer there, not only incomparably more than we can here, but without meriting. Make a virtue of necessity, as the saying is. If you feel that you have not the courage to choose what

contradicts your tastes, accept it with patience at least, since accept it you must."

"But how can one help being aggravated? I am provoked without intending it. You see it is very easy to you, Mrs. Tyrell; nothing provokes *you*."

Mrs. Tyrell smiled, but of what recollections that smile was the silent exponent, she did not explain. "Well, then, Mary," she said, "if things provoke you which I do not feel, you have all the more opportunity of meriting. But what is this great provocation, after all? Mrs. Roper wanted hot water."

"Yes, and she wanted hot water ten minutes before. What do you suppose it was for? For Rachel to wash her hands! I think she might have come and fetched it herself."

"Did you see her?"

"No; she was fiddle-faddling after something for Miss Wyndham."

"In plain English, she was engaged at the moment, and Mrs. Roper, who wished to set her to work at Miss Gertrude's white crape gown the moment she was free, rang for you. I know there is very little time to spare; Mrs. Wyndham wants Miss Gertrude to wear it at the party."

"And then I had to go up ten minutes later with some more, because that would not be hot enough for Miss Wyndham's sugar and water; she must have it piping hot. I should like to know if that's a dying to oneself, to have all those fancies. It's much more like killing of other people."

"Mary, you are very wrong," said Mrs. Tyrell, looking grave, almost stern. "Who are you, to judge another man's servant? Be it so, that it is a fancy—what is that to you? but charity, and even justice, might suggest another reason. Miss Wyndham has a bad cold, and the sugar and water,

she thinks, must be hot in order to do her good. For shame !”

Mary now burst out crying, and hid her face in her apron. Mrs. Tyrell left her, and went into the back kitchen. The girl sobbed, in the hopes she would come back to soothe her, and accept her penitence, but her friend took no notice this time. Perhaps she did not deem the penitence quite genuine, or thought the wound might be healed a little too soon.

These scenes were of frequent occurrence now, and nothing seemed to come of all the sorrow expressed, and possibly felt, after nature had relieved itself of its discomfort by an outbreak. Accordingly Mrs. Tyrell could not help suspecting a latent and subtle insincerity of purpose, and that what came to the surface on those occasions was symptomatic of an habitual state of mind rather than the fruit of surprise.

Poor Mary had been unfortunately influenced for evil by Rachel, whom she really disliked, and now, unknown to herself, envied for her promotion. The embryo lady's-maid certainly did not bear her honours meekly, and had come out in quite a new character ; her democratic grumbling had been exchanged for aristocratic airs, and she contrived more and more to find excuses for shirking the moderate portion of housemaid's work which fell to her share under the new change in the administration. Mrs. Roper's desire to make all the use she could of her adjutant's services, and Emma's love of personal attention, played into the girl's hands, and furnished her with plausible pretexts. Pleased with having an attendant more at her beck than Roper could or would consent to be, that young lady entirely forgot that while Rachel was “ fiddle-faddling ” in her room (to use Mary's term for the waiting-woman's services), something else must be neglected, or some one else must have extra labour. She looked upon the matter exclusively as

concerned herself. Can any one wonder at the portentous and heartless selfishness which the possession of absolute power has fostered into being when we constantly see similar circumstances, though on a microscopic scale, so fruitful in developing the same characteristics? Emma only meant to make herself comfortable, to serve her own plans. What else do the worst amongst us mean? She had now got a bad cold in her head, which threatened to go to her chest. A red nose for the party was the least calamity to be feared; a croaking voice seemed impending also; and what if, worse still, she should have to take to her bed and not appear at all! and so, to remedy the first evil, Rachel had been sent out for some orris-root powder to the chemist; Emma having discovered, to her great irritation, that her box was empty, and having contemptuously declined some flour which Mrs. Tyrell had sent up as a substitute. She was now lying on a sofa with her nose encased in the violet powder, while, to relieve the tightness of chest, she sipped the hot water which Rachel held for her, as she could not rise or move on account of the powder. Save in the intense application of mind with which these restorative measures were followed, the great importance attached to them, and the utter disregard of the convenience of others, there was nothing to deserve particular blame. To powder a red nose and sip hot sugar-and-water for a cold are assuredly very innocent actions; and Tyrell's charity allowed her to advert to nothing further; but the faulty temper which animated the whole proceeding was too palpable to escape any one's notice. Rachel perceived it, and made use of it; and she had already before her a vision of a confidential waiting-woman trusted with her young mistress's secrets, and employed to further her romantic designs. But had Emma any secrets? and would she entrust them to Rachel?

CHAPTER XII.

THE YOUNG LADY AND HER WAITING-WOMAN.

WE have not done with the sick-room yet. However uninteresting the patient and waiting-woman may seem to the reader, we must give a moment's attention to what passed between them this morning.

"A letter for you, Miss." James had just brought it to the door.

"Not *Miss* ; I have told you that before, Rachel ; it is vulgar and countrified. No one is called Miss by—by—any one who knows better." The last words dropped out rather absently, for Emma saw her brother's hand-writing, and opened the letter hurriedly. We will peep over her shoulder, a privilege which we may be sure Rachel would have envied us.

"Dearest Em,

"I am in despair, and ready to tear my hair, only that that would disfigure me, and not advance matters. Here I have been paying court to Madame Mère assiduously for these last ten days without catching even a sight of the beloved one. What am I to do ? The sly old lady, I am sure, does not desire me for a son-in-law, and my only chance is in surprising a confession of liking from the daughter, of which, between ourselves, I have good hopes. But the young lady has been so furiously well brought up, that if Mama is the medium of communication I have not the smallest chance ; and a letter, of course, can surprise nothing out of anybody. The reply will be deliberate, and influenced by the higher powers. What am I to do ? How is it possible to obtain even five minutes' unobserved conversation with the object of my affections, whom I seldom

can so much as see, even in company with others? Can your woman's brain, so fertile in devices, contrive any way of helping

"Your well-nigh despairing brother,

"ALGERNON."

"When would a letter be received in Alban Street to-day?" asked Emma, starting up in temporary oblivion of powdered nose and hot water.

"I really can't say, Ma'am, but I suppose this evening."

"Of course, I know that, and I don't want guesses. Just ask Roper—the precise hour, and lose no time. Stop, I will go myself. No, I will run down to the drawing-room and write the letter ready. The ladies are out, are they not?"

"Oh, Miss—Ma'am—your nose!" ejaculated Rachel, as Emma's hand was on her bedroom door.

"True," said Emma, returning, and glancing at herself in the glass. "My goodness! what a fright I am!"

"Law! Ma'am; how can you say so?"

"I think the powder *has* done it some good, though," said Emma, brushing the remainder off.

"I'll just send Mrs. Roper, and run for ink and writing-paper," said Rachel, all obligingness and despatch.

Mrs. Roper's reply was unsatisfactory: it was after twelve, so the letter would not be delivered till the evening. Now Algernon, Emma happened to know, was going out of town for a couple of days; and, to be of any use, the letter must be at his lodgings before three o'clock. The post therefore could not serve him.

"I *must* send a note to my brother; Roper, who could take it?"

"James might be wanted; and he is out, too, just now."

"I cannot send James, of course. Is there no one else? What a bore that we live so far off everything!"

"If I took the omnibus," suggested the officious attendant, who had returned with writing-materials, "I could reach Mr. Wyndham's lodgings by one o'clock."

Mrs. Roper objected her need of Rachel's services for Miss Gertrude's gown; but, the new waiting-maid having declared that she did not care how long she sat up at night to finish it, so as Miss Wyndham might not be disappointed of her letter being in time, Roper's remonstrances were overruled, and she was prevailed on to give a reluctant consent.

"It would be as well," said Emma carelessly, "not to go out of your way to mention it to Mama: she might be afraid Gertrude's gown would not be finished."

Roper grumbled something inaudible, but Rachel gave an intelligent look of acquiescence, which was meant to express the quintessence of devoted trustworthiness. This approach to a confidential mission made her heart beat with delight, and her eyes sparkle, as, in her best bonnet, trimmed with blue ribbons, and displaying, according to the then approved fashion of bonnets, more than three parts of the head which it was presumed to cover, she hastened along, with all the fresh fervour of her new office, to catch the first omnibus.

Algernon lived at no great distance from the Kensington turnpike. Here the damsel alighted, and had soon reached the door of his lodgings. Rachel had been charged to make sure that the note was delivered to Mr. Wyndham immediately, and, if he was out, then to be very particular to leave directions that he was to receive it the moment he returned. She had accordingly settled in her own mind that the best way to make sure of Mr. Algernon receiving the important despatch at once, was to ask to see him herself, particularly as this combined the opportunity of observing the effect produced by its contents, besides the chance of catching some stray exclamation, or of some

query being addressed to her which might throw a little light on the mystery. The young woman who answered the door was, of course, quite aware that the smartly-dressed individual who asked with an air of much assumed confidence whether Mr. Wyndham was at home, as she wished to speak to him for a moment, was, as the saying is, no better than herself, and no way entitled to command an audience from a gentleman of fashion. She was not, therefore, disposed to be accommodating. Mr. Wyndham was at home, but there was a gentleman with him ; she was quite sure he could not see any one.

“ You can take a message, though, I suppose,” replied Rachel, snappishly. “ Please to say Miss Wyndham’s lady’s-maid is here, by her desire. My lady wished me to see him about something very particular.”

This shot took effect, and the guardian of the door removed her person from the threshold, admitted Rachel, and stumped up stairs.

A knock, and a lazy “ Come in,” followed by a “ Well, Jane ; what is it ?”

“ A young person, sir ; and wants very particular to see you.” Jane was rather slow in enunciation, and was not clever in delivering herself of information in a clear form. The right end never went first, and the main point was sometimes omitted altogether.

A laugh from a strange voice followed. Rachel had taken the liberty of walking up one flight of stairs, and thus caught a portion of the dialogue. Algernon’s reply was lost in the stranger’s loud laugh ; but, the result having been apparently an acquiescence in the young person’s request, Jane turned round and, seeing Rachel on the first landing, beckoned her to come on, and stuck the drawing-room door open for her entrance. When the girl found herself in presence of the two gentlemen she felt a little abashed. It is pleasant to have to record this little trait of

modesty on her part, if it were but for its rarity. Rachel knew Algernon well by sight, but he had probably never seen, or never remarked, his father's quondam housemaid ; he was lounging on a sofa smoking a cigar, which he threw aside politely as she entered, and raised himself into a sitting attitude, preparatory to rising altogether. Algernon was well-mannered to every one ; the other gentleman was leaning back in an arm-chair busy with a tooth-pick ; the remains of breakfast were on the table. I am sorry to say he did *not* discontinue his occupation, but stared at Rachel out of his bush of whiskers and beard.

Rachel's self-confidence had for the moment deserted her, and she dropped into the housemaid, with the humble consciousness of her position. "Please, sir," she stammered out, "you will excuse me, I am Rachel, sir, from Berkeley Square."

"Oh, Rachel, to be sure ; not expecting to see you, I did not recollect you at once," said the good-natured Algernon, more good-natured than strictly truthful, for if he had looked all day he never would have recognised a face virtually unknown to him, though the name was familiar to him. "You are looking so well, too," he added, in a pleasant but quite respectful tone. Algernon was well aware how bitter to a modest woman in an inferior class must be a compliment from her superior seasoned with the slightest freedom or impertinence, and he had the good feeling to give every woman the credit for modesty as long as he was not sure she did not deserve it. Rachel brightened and regained her self-possession. "Sit down, my good girl ; I suppose you have brought a message ? Nothing the matter, I hope ?"

"No, sir, thank you ; I am waiting on Miss Wyndham now." A movement on the part of the bearded gentleman, who now actually rose and pushed a chair towards Rachel. "Law ! sir, I could not think of sitting ;"—this was paren-

thetical—"I'm waiting on Miss Wyndham now, and she was so very particular that you should have this note before you left town, that I came with it in the omnibus. My missis was out; it was Miss Wyndham as sent me; and that's the reason I asked to see you, for fear there might be some mistake."

Algernon took the letter without a comment, opened it, and passed his eyes rapidly over its contents.

"Miss Wyndham's not at all well," observed the messenger, disappointed of the expected exclamation; "she has a bad cold, as I dare say she says, sir."

But Algernon was not going to tell Rachel, or any one else, by either word or look what she did say, so we must peep again, and let ourselves into the secret.

"MY DEAR ALGERNON,

"Nothing could be more fortunate. Gertrude was to have gone to-morrow morning with Anne to Kensington Gardens at an hour when it is sacred to nursery-maids, children, and governesses, to sketch a clump of trees—the sole attendant, an old French nurse of Anne's, considered by Madame sufficient protection at that hour. I have so bad a cold that Mama cannot spare Gertrude, who was to have spent the day in Grosvenor Street, so the 'beloved' will be alone. Your ingenuity will suggest some expedient for dodging the old woman. Besides, the French never understand much English if they live here all their days. I presume it will be worth while to disappoint or affront your Windsor friend rather than lose so invaluable an opportunity, by being out of town to-morrow morning."

"I will send a line, Rachel; just wait a moment"; and Algernon walked to the writing-table. "Where are you going, Baines?" This was to his friend, who was moving towards the door.

"I have just remembered some business, Wyndham ; so must say good-bye."

"But perhaps our roads lie the same way ? I shall be at your service in a moment."

"No, no ; quite in another direction ; don't think of me" ; and Captain Baines—for the individual was no other than Emma's favoured admirer—took his departure without further remark.

Whatever his pressing business might be, it did not interfere with a little loitering, as, some twenty minutes later, he might have been seen standing talking to a smart young woman with blue ribbons in her bonnet, who was waiting for the omnibus. I am not sure she did not miss one, so engaged was her attention, and something very like half a sovereign was dropped into her hand, as the next came in sight ; when Rachel—for, of course, it was Rachel—with beaming eye and heightened colour held up her finger to the approaching vehicle, and the Captain pursued his leisurely and, apparently, rather objectless walk. Perhaps the "business" had already been transacted.

Let us follow the messenger home, and listen to her account of her embassy to her employer.

"So you saw Mr. Algernon ?"

"Yes, ma'am ; I thought they were so careless at lodgings, and perhaps the letter might just wait till the first time the bell rung, and Mr. Wyndham might slip out before he got it."

"Quite right," replied Emma, looking satisfied, and transferring Algernon's note to the pocket of her dress.

"Law ! ma'am ; what a handsome gentleman there was sitting with Mr. Algernon ! So noble-looking, with black whiskers !—so black !"

Emma looked up, arched her eyebrow with a half-inquiring glance, coloured a little, and seemed about to make an observation, but, apparently thinking better of it, only said, "Very likely."

But Rachel continued, "And he *did* seem in such a taking about your cold."

"About my cold? What did he know about that?" and Emma's usually haughty countenance was now suffused with a deep blush.

"He heard me tell Mr. Algernon," replied Rachel, looking straight at her young mistress, in order that she might be well aware that she noticed her confusion.

"Nonsense, girl!" said Emma, rising and walking away; "how can you talk such stuff?" She felt ruffled at having betrayed her interest in the circumstance.

"O, I beg your pardon, ma'am," rejoined the malicious attendant; "I did not mean to say anything wrong. I am sorry I have given offence"; and she turned to occupy herself with some little trifling work.

A slight pause; and then, Emma's curiosity having triumphed over her pride—Rachel expected as much—she condescended to ask a question. "And pray how did this black-haired gentleman show this wonderful interest about my cold?"

Rachel had gained her point, and, having received this permission to be communicative, gave a full account of what we already know or guess,—that the Captain had waylaid her in the street to make most eager and anxious inquiries after Miss Wyndham's health; only the little concluding circumstance of the half-sovereign retaining-fee was, of course, not noticed, though it had been duly acted upon, as expected by the donor.

Emma listened without rebuking her attendant again. She did certainly say that Rachel ought not to stand talking to strangers in the street, and that Mrs. Wyndham would not be pleased if she knew it, but she did *not* say that she was herself displeased.

"Law! ma'am; I'm not going to say a word to missis. You may quite trust me."

The expression "trust me" jarred a little on the feelings of Emma, but the well-known knock of her mother, who was returning from some morning shopping with Gertrude, reminded her that, after all, it might be well that Rachel should know how to hold her tongue, even at the expense of a slight mortification to her own pride.

The ice was now broken. The waiting-maid had won a position towards the realization of her dreams, and was resolved, we may rely upon it, to make full use of the advantage.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROPOSAL.

I AM not writing a love tale ; you must not, therefore, be disappointed, my reader, if I tell you very little about the meeting in Kensington Gardens ; no more, in fact, than you can gather incidentally from a private scene to which I will introduce you. I will lift the veil for a moment, that you may be the witness of one of those confidences which must ever be, under the most favourable circumstances, more or less agitating to the natural feelings of the mother. I mean when the daughter first tells her that she loves one well enough to leave her for ever—yes, to leave her ; for it is to leave, were it but to dwell in a home of nearest vicinity. It is to leave her gentle authority, her sweet guiding control ; her love is no longer to rule as law ; she will not be less dear to her child—oh, no ! but she must now be loved by her less exclusively ; and alas, for the poverty of the human heart, which ill can furnish two engrossing affections !

Such a confidence Madame d'Héricourt knows she has received, though Anne has but confessed Algernon's declaration of attachment, with her fair head half buried in her mother's bosom, and has now ventured to raise her timid blue eyes to read in the expression of that mother's face the feelings with which she has received the avowal.

Madame d'Héricourt was silent ; she could not trust herself to speak ; thoughts, however, such as we have alluded to, were not present to her mind ; they would have met with no encouragement had they arisen, but they were altogether stifled under the pressure of more painful considerations. She was suffering a pang of deep disappointment. She had brought up her child for God, not for herself ; she had schooled down all selfish, exclusive love, all grudging possession of her darling ; she was content to part with her, most content if for God alone ; but if that were not His design, then to give her to a good and worthy man, who would not mar by evil influence the work which she trusted was begun, but would fortify her in the practice of every Christian virtue : and such a one she believed she had found, and kept in reserve. No doubt Anne's unpreoccupied heart would be bestowed according to her mother's advice, and in accordance with her own evident sentiments of esteem and friendship, should she incline in favour of marriage ; and Madame d'Héricourt had fondly hoped that she had so hedged in her daughter from all intimacy and, as much as possible, acquaintance, which could lead to an unwise attachment, as to leave no apparent alternative, when the matter was set before her, save of a good choice or of one incomparably better. Fearful, however, as I have observed, of being beforehand with God's designs, she had resolved upon some further delay, before ascertaining Anne's wishes with respect to a state of life ; and now a worldly man had stepped in, with his superficial attractions and skin-deep goodness, and had usurped the young heart which she had scrupled to bespeak

for one of whose genuine excellence she was convinced ; for a sure instinct told Madame d'Héricourt that Algernon was in fact nothing better than a man of the world, although gifted with many natural good qualities. He had, it is true, succeeded in concealing the evil ; good tact and prudence alike had led him to draw a veil over all that could have displeased or alarmed the strictest principles ; but the Christian mother could not be mistaken as to the deficiency of piety and the predominance of the spirit of this world. She missed the sweet odour of the former ; she detected the subtle infection of the latter. Yet she could point to nothing reprehensible ; she could allege no proof of the correctness of her impressions ; and so she was silent, till Anne interrogated her with that meek upward glance.

"My dearest child, you have known him so short a time ; surely you cannot regard him with any other sentiments than those one entertains for an agreeable acquaintance. I am aware that you *like* him, still you cannot really"

Madame d'Héricourt stopped short.

But Anne, though all confusion, summoned up her courage to complete the unfinished sentence : "love him no, Mama, perhaps hardly so much, but I feel as if I could, as if I *should*, love him, particularly now that I know he loves me."

"And what reply did you make, Anne ?"

"I said I could not give him any ; that I must reflect on the subject ; and, above all, I must speak to you, and ask your advice."

"Did that answer satisfy him ?"

"I think it did—tolerably, at least"—answered Anne, with much simplicity. "He said, of course your consent was necessary ; but to know whether I loved him I must question my own heart ; and he pressed me again just to say so."

"And did you say so ?" rejoined her mother, repressing

by a strong effort the outward expression of her painful anxiety.

"No, I think I said nothing ; I hurried away, and begged him not to follow me ; the last thing I heard him say was that he would call on you. Oh, I remember, too, he said he would not have made so abrupt a declaration had he been able to see more of me, and give me time to know him better."

"He means to call," repeated Madame d'Héricourt ; "and what do you wish me to say to him, my love ?"

"What do you wish, dearest mother ? I fear this does not please you."

"Well, my dear child, I do not wish to conceal from you that it makes me very anxious. I cannot be otherwise where your happiness is at stake ; and it is my duty as well. I really know so very little of Mr. Wyndham, I mean of his character and principles, and particularly his religious principles and habits."

"I think he is very good," said Anne, timidly. "I am sure I should not like him if I thought he was not ; and he has always shown a great interest in any religious subject."

"In anything, my love, of course, which appeared to interest *you*,—sacred prints and the like : this is natural ; we must not place too much dependence on symptoms of this sort ; neither," she added, seeing Anne about to make some rejoinder, "ought we to presume anything unfavourable in the absence of proof."

"And so I was going to say, Mama, that we cannot know more till we know him better ; and, as you asked me what I wished"—she looked up again to her mother.

"Yes, my love ; that is exactly what I desire fully to know."

"It would be," continued Anne, "that you should say just this—that we did not know him well enough to give

any answer yet, and then allow him to visit here, just as Mr. Rochfort comes, you know, Mama, if you have no objection ; and so in this way we should become well acquainted with him."

Alas for all poor Madame d'Héricourt's cherished plans ! it was a bitter trial. Moreover, she felt in her bosom an inward rising of dislike and repugnance, more even than she could reasonably account for, to the proposal which had come to upset them. Was it all prudent caution ? was it an instinctive warning of Algernon's unworthiness ? or was it partly prejudice and disappointment operating in his disfavour ? or was it a compound of all ? She knew not ; nor can I tell you ; but this I can tell you, that Madame d'Héricourt always suspected the purity of her motives and the accuracy of her judgment, when she felt excited ; so she determined not to reply in a hurry, but to give herself time for calm reflection and, above all, for prayer.

"My love," she said, "you have now candidly told me your wishes ; I feel I cannot answer you without a little consideration. I will speak to you again in the course of the morning, before Mr. Wyndham calls ; meantime let us pray, dearest, that God will guide and help us both ; me to give wise and prudent advice, and you to do whatever is most pleasing to Him."

The distressed mother retired to her oratory, to pour forth her griefs, her anxieties, and her irresolutions at the foot of the Crucifix. There we will leave her without intruding on her privacy, and will rejoin her only as she comes out calm and grave, but with her usual sweet serenity restored. She seeks her daughter ; she has made up her mind, and is unwilling to keep her longer in suspense.

"Anne, dearest," she said, making her daughter sit down by her, and taking her hand in her own, "I have always found you docile to reason, and faithful to duty. I am persuaded, therefore, that you will at once cheerfully

acquiesce in the decision I have arrived at. I see the strong partiality you entertain for Mr. Wyndham ; indeed, you have not disguised a preference which I do not think of blaming. There is much to account for your liking but at the same time I cannot consider it really justified I mean in a reasonable point of view, upon so very short and superficial an acquaintance. It has no solid ground at present ; possibly—remember, I only say possibly—there may be none to warrant it : this remains to be proved ; but I should be acting very wrongly by you if I allowed what must as yet be not much more than a sentiment to become an attachment before we are well assured of the worth of the object. You say you wish to know him better ; but, my dear child, the sort of intercourse which would be established by allowing him to become a regular visitor, would indeed lead to your liking him better, but would hardly furnish the sort of knowledge we desire. He will know he is on trial ; he will naturally desire to appear such as we wish him to be ; the very desire will almost make him fancy himself to be such ; temporary transformations of this kind are not rare. Besides, you will yourself feel—I am sure I should in your place—that to see him on this footing is to give him very strong encouragement ; and that after a while it would become difficult, almost impossible, indeed, to recede. You will have retained, it is true, your liberty of giving a negative at the end of some allotted probationary term, but will it be a liberty you will be quite free to exercise ? Besides, liking would on your part be gradually ripening into attachment ; and you would unconsciously have passed into a phase of mind which ill qualifies it to form an independent judgment. His own affection would have meanwhile been deepened, his expectations raised,—and very justly so, I must say ; so that at the end of the time, which could not be indefinitely prolonged, a refusal

would seem to have become a thing quite out of the question."

Madame d'Héricourt paused, and cast a glance at her daughter. Anne was silent, her eyes cast down, but the blood suffusing her cheek betrayed the inward emotion. Without looking up, Anne, at last, aware that some response was called for, muttered softly, "Whatever you wish and think best, dearest Mama—yet I own—it would not be true of me not to say so—I should refuse him even now with some regret."

"I do not ask you to refuse him, dearest," resumed her mother; "I do not even wish it, after what you have told me of your sentiments; but I have a plan of my own to suggest, which in its object is similar to yours, but will not entail its disadvantages or perplexities. You are young, Anne; so young, that as yet I fancy you have not ever seriously turned your mind to what ought to be your future state of life; the one, I mean, which God would choose for you, if you permit Him to choose. I had begun to think that it was time you should make this a matter of prayer. We are, as you know, purposing to return this summer to France, and I meant with you to make a retreat in the convent of ——— before going to Héricourt for the summer months. You will see your director, and have every opportunity of deciding whether marriage is the state of life which God designs for you. That it is so I think highly probable; but we cannot prejudge such matters. When your mind is satisfactorily settled with respect to this point, I will endeavour, by every means at my disposal, to obtain the best information with regard to Mr. Wyndham's character and disposition, habits, tastes, and, above all, religious principles. I know, my dearest child, that, pleasing as he may be to you, you would not desire to unite yourself by the holiest bonds to one who would not aid you to lead a holy life."

"Oh, no, Mama," was Anne's prompt and cordial reply.

"We shall, according to my present intentions," continued her mother, "return in the early spring to London, and then we shall be in a position to form a decision."

"But what will you say to Mr. Wyndham?" asked the daughter.

"I should say what you yourself suggested—that our present knowledge of him was too imperfect; I should add that you were besides very young, and that I could not under these circumstances allow of any engagement, or further meetings, which might lead to one; that I wished both you and him to remain perfectly free, and all visiting at our house to be discontinued. At the same time I should place no bar or prohibition as regards the future; only it must be thoroughly understood that the whole thing is for the present, and for some time to come, at an end. If the young man really loves you, he will accept these conditions; they will test the solidity of his own attachment, and will enable you to form a sober estimate of the character of your preference. Should he prove inconstant, you will not break your heart, my love—will you?"

"Oh, no," replied Anne, smiling; "I should not break my heart, certainly. I should not think, if he was so changeable, that he was worth breaking one's heart about."

And Anne was really not very sorry for this arrangement. She did not like refusing her fascinating admirer, but she was better pleased not to be hurried into acceptance. We cannot say as much for the lover. He was not satisfied; yet, on the whole, he knew that matters might have stood worse for him. He was not irrevocably dismissed; he flattered himself he had made an impression, if only it should last, and if too much should not during these long months transpire concerning his ways and habits. At any rate he would be a pattern of discretion while on

his trial. All this flashed through his mind as he listened to his sentence. What he disliked most was his being forbidden the house. He pleaded hard for one parting interview at least ; but this Madame d'Héricourt peremptorily refused. It would, she said, at once quite alter the character of the separation. Algernon knew this well ; and it was his reason for desiring it, as it was the wise mother's for objecting to it. He submitted, however, with a good grace.

"Believe me, it is best it should be thus," said Madame d'Héricourt. "Trust me, I have but a single interest in the affair—my daughter's happiness ; and I may add, Mr. Wyndham, that I am by no means careless of yours ; it will best be secured by the same precautions. Perhaps," she added, smiling, "you may before long feel grateful to me for having thus jealously guarded your entire liberty."

"No, no," replied Algernon, "I shall never change."

"Well, be it so. I know you think so now ; but if it should be otherwise, no blame will attach to you ; and I must take care that you should be certain that none could possibly be imputed to you. If you persevere in your present sentiments, you will, I may assure you, never find me unreasonable."

With this she held out her hand, which Algernon pressed, and even presumed, on the strength of her foreign habits, to raise to his lips. And so they parted good friends ; and Madame d'Héricourt had reason, on the whole, not to be dissatisfied with her day's work. A reprieve had been, at any rate, obtained, and the event she committed to God.

One question remained : was Eustace to be told ? She felt on consideration that this communication was due to him. Accordingly she briefly acquainted him with what had taken place. Algernon had abruptly proposed ; Anne seemed well disposed towards him, but had referred the matter to her. She had in consequence put an end to all

visits and meetings ; and the thing was for the present to be, save in this respect, as if it had not occurred. "Anne's impression is clearly not deep," she added ; "and you know that at any rate I should not have allowed her as yet to enter into any engagement—even one which would have been more satisfactory to me in every way. Of Mr. Wyndham, of course, I know but little."

"He is a regular man of the world," was Eustace's somewhat bitter rejoinder ; "but I am scarcely surprised."

"You mean that I ought not to have allowed such a one the free *entrée* of my house. It was not my doing, as I could explain were it worth while ; but I suppose, Eustace, you do not question my prudence ?"

"Not in the least ; you must pardon me, but this is a terrible disappointment to me."

She knew it was ; for he was one who, though undemonstrative, felt deeply, and she could not doubt his genuine attachment to her daughter. That Eustace would not resign her until certain that her heart was another's, she needed not the assurance he gave her, but she advised him, during the remaining period of their stay in London, to come very seldom to the house, and not spend any of the old familiar evenings with them. "It will be better for many reasons," she said.

Some of these reasons were obvious, and one, which she would not have wished to allege, weighed powerfully with her. The contrast, already adverted to by her daughter, between Eustace and Algernon, would not at this moment have operated in favour of the former, who was sure, besides, like all who are of a reserved temperament, to show to special disadvantage when under the influence of discouragement, which is apt to make persons of this character take refuge in a silence of a peculiarly unattractive and ungracious description. Eustace willingly took her advice, and was sparing of his visits, which for some excuse he

always shortened ; but, notwithstanding his efforts to appear as usual, his natural gravity was, on these occasions, deepened into something so very like moodiness, that Pauline's quick observant eye noticed the change.

"What can have come over Mr. Rochfort?" she said to her sister one day ; "he is grown so disagreeable!"

"Disagreeable? I have not observed it," replied Anne, very sincerely ; for, in fact, she had been too much occupied with her own reflections to give much heed to the behaviour of others ; and, indeed, at no time did she advert to what was external with the same vivacity as her younger sister, whose perceptive faculties were of a very acute and lively order.

"Yes, disagreeable ; and, to tell you the truth," she added, lowering her voice to a confidential whisper, "he has not, I fancy, ever been the same since the first evening Mr. Wyndham came. I have a notion he is jealous ; indeed I overheard Emma say she was sure he was."

"Jealous of what?" said Anne, suddenly blushing up to the roots of her hair.

"O, I don't know ; just only because we liked Mr. Wyndham, I suppose ; and Emma's remark put the idea into my head, or I should not have thought of it"; and Pauline ran off, singing carelessly.

A new idea had now also been suggested to Anne, which put her upon a train of thought favourable neither to her own inward tranquillity nor to the plans which her mother cherished *in petto*, and over which she hoped she had thrown so discreet a veil. Truly the new friends had not brought additional peace to this household.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO FAMILY SCENES.

PEOPLE cannot get on well in the gay London world without paying their way. If they do not give dinners and evening parties, invitations to dinners and evening parties will be few and far between ; they will receive them mainly from personal friends, always a limited number. Exceptions must be made, of course, for the case of persons whose presence is considered, for one reason or other, an honour or advantage. Fashion, position, beauty—especially beauty which has got a name, and has therefore added fashion to its prestige—a reputation for talent or agreeability, and so forth, will cause individuals to be objects of attention for their own sakes ; but the rule may be said to hold good for most families of mediocre pretensions—of single gentlemen I am not speaking—families who, without being reckoned among the *élite* of the fine world, nevertheless do not sink to the level of what goes by the name of “second set” ; and who, if they do not precisely add to the distinction of the society with which they mingle, which in a general way is the best, are not considered to disgrace it. The *beau monde* does not wonder at seeing them, nor does it superciliously ask who they are, or how they got there, in however fashionable a house they may be seen, although to the very finest circles they have rare access. These families, as I have said, have to make efforts in order to maintain themselves on the high level which they desire to keep, and not to be forgotten or overlooked ; they must, as was observed, pay their way. To the set below them their presence would be an honour, for there they would figure as fashionables ; but this would not serve their purpose.

They cling to a higher sphere of society, and in this sphere they are not worth very much.

When I say they must pay their way, I do not mean that money alone could avail to purchase all which they may contrive to secure. There must be, besides, certain recommendations, of one order or another, in their favour. It was just this sort of recommendations which the Wyndhams possessed. The father was a man of good family and a member of Parliament; he had always mixed in good society, and had kept up his acquaintance, with whom he was generally popular. His wife, it is true, was of inferior extraction; but then she was handsome and showy, as well as lively, and was generally reckoned agreeable. Most persons, indeed, were ignorant of what her extraction had been, and, as none of her relations appeared on the scene, she had nothing to stamp her as vulgar—a thing naturally considered a far greater objection than low birth. Very few, perhaps, comparatively, even among those whose own manners are through habit and education conventionally refined, possess the gift of a sensitive discrimination between acquired and ingrained refinement of manners. Beatrice Wyndham was certainly not vulgar in the ordinary sense of the word, and so she passed muster with the world in general. The two girls were pretty, not precisely great beauties,—at least they had not had the good or ill fortune to be reckoned among the special beauties of the season,—but pretty they certainly were, and graced a ball-room. Algernon made nearer approaches to being positively fashionable than the rest of his family, and could easily make his way almost anywhere on his own personal merits.

Such was the position of the Wyndham family. We know already that they were not rich. Yet the way had to be paid, and this chiefly through the mother's exertions, for beyond a desire to have the dinners he gave good, and sent

up in good taste, the father's ambition did not extend. Parties and balls, indeed, were not at all in his way, and if occasionally called upon to play the part of chaperon to his daughters, when Mrs. Wyndham happened to be indisposed, the charge was reckoned by him as decidedly irksome. Nevertheless he acquiesced in his wife's well-supported arguments, and still more in her wish that the girls should go out in London society, and submitted with tolerable cheerfulness to the expenses thereby entailed. These were considerable in the way of dress alone. During the previous season, moreover, Mrs. Wyndham had judged it absolutely essential to give both a party and a ball. But these, especially the ball, involved so large an outlay that Mr. Wyndham had grumbled a good deal. And now another year had come round, with its fresh requirements ; a second daughter had come out ; it was necessary to do something to keep the wheel going. Accordingly, cards had been sent out for a party, as we have seen. Mr. Wyndham had agreed, upon being informed that it was a thing of necessity, and that it would be positively shabby not to make some return for the civilities received ; that invitations would soon fall off if they never opened their doors, which would be particularly hard on poor Gertrude, whose first season this was ; but his wife did not venture to hint at a ball ; she would at least secure the party first.

"Mama," said Emma, as together mother and daughter were conning over the visiting list, and speculating upon the numbers likely to fill their drawing-rooms on the following Wednesday, "we must have a ball, of course, also ; no one cares much about parties, except the old ones ; in fact, the only good of the party is to dispose politely of lots of dowdies who must be asked to something, and would fill up a ball-room, besides being no credit to it. The party is a safety-valve for getting rid of these redundancies."

"Your father, I am sure," said Mrs. Wyndham, "will

not agree to a ball this year. I have not ventured to suggest it, but mean to plead for a second party when your uncle John's visit is over ; for really I am unable otherwise to ask all those whom I cannot help asking ; we should overflow, and I want the second to be the most select."

"But, dear Mama," rejoined Emma, "when we are about it, why not have the dancing too? it makes quite a different thing of it, and can make very little difference in the expense, which I suppose is Papa's objection."

"Ah, but it does make a great deal of difference in the expense," replied the prudent mother. "You must have a band, and take carpets up, and be more fully lighted, and have a regular supper, in addition to the refreshments which suffice for a party. You have no idea, child, of the difference."

"Why need we have a regular band?" asked Gertrude, looking up from her novel,—Gertrude relished her novel much as she did her balls,—"Mrs. Penfold gave a dance the other day with only a pianoforte, harp, and something else, and the carpet left down."

"There was a drugget nailed down to save the carpet," said the observant mother. "Mrs. Penfold is the Bishop of Dorset's wife : that was the reason there was a carpet. The Bishop would not like to be said to give balls."

"How very comical!" exclaimed Emma, laughing. "In for a penny in for a pound, I should have thought. Dancing is dancing, whether the carpet is on or off; only I know it is very heavy work with the carpet down, and waltzing next to impossible."

"You see it was a compromise, my dear, between the Bishop and his lady."

"O, dear Mama, please don't talk of any one's lady," said Emma, very earnestly. "I heard Lady Jane Follett sneering at some one's vulgarity the other day for saying it."

"Mind your own business, Emma," rejoined Mrs. Wynd-

ham, rather ruffled, "I am not going to talk of the Bishop's lady to Lady Jane Follett; but, really, what you may see in the *Times* any day cannot be so vulgar."

"It is not the thing in society, I am sure," insisted the daughter, "to talk of people's ladies; just ask Algernon. But, dear Mammy, don't be cross with me," she added, rather coaxingly, for Emma could not afford to quarrel with her mother just now.

A slight pause ensued, and then Mrs. Wyndham, who seemed to have been musing, and apparently thought it good to be appeased, resumed the subject of the dance.

"I wonder, if we had dancing on a drugget, and just a few amateur performers, whether in that case refreshments down-stairs in the dining-room, intermingled with some light solidities, would do?"

"I have an idea, Mama," said Emma; "that is, if Papa really will not hear of the regular ball; of course that would be a thousand times better."

"He will *not* hear of it," said her mother, emphatically. "I doubt—I more than doubt—if he will come in to this other plan."

"Well, then, I think it would be a good thing to add on a little dance of this sort on the Saturday evening, when we are to have our dinner. We need not call it a dance to Pappy; only say we have asked a few refreshers in the evening. Julia Vincent plays the harp beautifully, and I know that M. Dubois, her master, who often goes to accompany her in the morning on the piano, is most obliging. He will come for a trifle; and perhaps we can scrape up a violin somehow among our friends—let me see—"

"Well, that is really not a bad idea, Emma," said her mother; "and, being Saturday evening, people will not stay so late, so that there need not be anything like a supper."

"Pappy's mind, too, will be taken up about the dinner, and so he won't think of objecting," added Emma.

"Yes, but when he sees shoals pouring in . . ." observed Mrs. Wyndham, again relapsing into doubts.

"But I would not ask shoals," said the daughter; "that is just it. I would only ask the *cream* of our visiting list, and just those near friends one cannot disoblige, and enough *men*: that is a great point."

"Well, we must see," replied the accommodating mother. "Let us look over the list, and dot off those who should be asked."

"And we must add on a few more to the party, Mammy, just to weed the dance of incumbrances. Not a dowdy or useless middle-aged fogie must we have on the Saturday."

"But, Emma, we shall burst if we ask more on Wednesday."

"Dear Mama, how tiresome you are! It was only yesterday that you were saying that you were afraid we should be very thin, as there are several other parties that night."

Mrs. Wyndham always wavered between the two opposing fears of repletion or attenuation on these occasions; she condescended to laugh, therefore, at the not unmerited reproach, and proceeded to discuss the project with her daughter. The closeness of the time was objected as a further difficulty by Mrs. Wyndham, which Emma, a good special-pleader when her wishes were involved, disposed of by saying that this was a positive advantage, as nothing else was likely to be started to compete with them. "Besides," she added, "people always like 'impromptus' best; and the shortness of the notice will prepare them not to expect a great set-out in the way of refreshment." This she knew was a powerful argument, so she pressed it home, and, seizing the happy moment, suggested that she and Gertrude should begin writing the "invites." "You see, Mama, we avoid the expense of printed cards and the formality."

"But I must speak to your father first."

"O, yes; before they are sent, of course; but as we must scribble for our lives, in order to be ready to fire off at the word of permission, we must set to work at once. Now, Gertrude, put away that charming book, and come and lend a hand."

"Suppose your uncle John should have arrived by Saturday week, as I fear he will?" suggested Mrs. Wyndham, with a blank countenance.

"Well, that will be a bore, no doubt,—an immense bore; but it will be worse at the dinner, where he will be more remarked. I dare say he will go to bed afterwards. He is by way of being very good, you know."

"But he is not precise at all. John Sanders takes things very simply, my dear, and will think no harm of a little dancing, you may be sure. If he is sleepy he will go to bed; but, by-the-bye, where is he to sleep if he is here that night? The little room we shall want for the cloaks."

"Dear me, Mama, how many difficulties you conjure up! Surely we could clear the attic for that one night, if it comes to the worst, and pack him up there."

Leaving the party in Berkeley Square in the midst of these interesting arrangements, we will intrude for a moment on Madame d'Héricourt's quiet boudoir, and listen to a few words which passed that same morning between Anne and her mother. Both were working, but the former was thoughtful, and the piece of embroidery on which she was engaged had sunk on her knee. Her mother was nearer the window, her face being partially averted. Anne was thoughtful, then, and her thoughts did not seem to be of an agreeable kind, for she wore an air of perturbation unusual on her placid brow. She was, in fact, pondering on Pauline's injudicious suggestion with reference to Eustace Rochfort, and it had led her to revert to many little incidents which had passed unobserved by her at the time,

or had been dismissed from her mind. Emma, the reader may remember, first started the idea that Eustace might be designed for her future husband, and favoured by her mother in this capacity. Anne disliked the observation, and resented it as an impertinence on the part of Emma, whose levity she referred, however, to thoughtlessness, and excused in consequence. But to the remark itself she had not attached any importance, though it had caused her to feel uneasy and confused, when subjected to Emma's scrutiny in Eustace Rochfort's presence. As for the hint with respect to Eustace's personal feelings regarding her, she had not given it the smallest serious consideration. Then followed the acquaintance with Algernon. She recalled to mind that her mother did not seem to dislike him personally, and never said a word in his disparagement; but she *now* also remembered that she had appeared a little touchy and annoyed when a comparison was made by Pauline between him and Eustace, to the disadvantage of the latter.

And, after all, was there not some truth in her sister's remark that Mr. Rochfort's manner had been changed ever since the introduction of this new acquaintance? He had certainly been more habitually cold and reserved. Pauline's powers of observation were rarely at fault, though the conclusions she drew were not always worth much. But Anne was beginning to draw conclusions herself, and to put two and two together—sad work when we are framing a bill of indictment against any one. She passed on to her mother's evident reluctance to entertain an idea of her union with Algernon. True, she had given good reasons for postponing any engagement, reasons which Anne could not controvert; but was it just possible that, her mother's feelings being already embarked in favour of one so unlike him, she was unconsciously prejudiced against Mr. Wyndham? Anne recoiled, however, from suspecting the parent she so much

revered of prejudice, and so she proceeded to cast the matter in another form. Her mother desired her marriage with Mr. Rochfort; she knew him well, esteemed him highly, and regarded him already in the light of a son—possibly believed that she herself was beginning to have that kind of preference for him, grounded on esteem and frequent association, which would easily lead to a warmer sentiment by-and-by, and that the appearance of Mr. Wyndham at that juncture, with his brilliant qualities and engaging manners, had come to mar these prospects, and divert her incipient preference from a more estimable object, as her mother esteemed their young friend to be. And very likely her mother thought that there was more of imagination than reality in the inclination she had manifested for Algeron; it was a fancy which time would dispel, and then she might revert to her former supposed favourable sentiments for Eustace Rochfort.

But had she ever entertained such sentiments? Surely never; the thought had never crossed her mind, nor did she think she would ever feel disposed to regard him as her possible future husband. He was a very good young man, as good as gold; but so was her mother, most exceedingly good, and she loved her mother, and did not love him. Certainly she would not marry any one who was *not* good, but a man's being good was not reason enough for marrying him. Why should she leave her dearly loved parent, in order to bestow herself on ever so worthy a man, if she had no attraction towards him? Why marry at all under such circumstances? There was no necessity to marry, even in the absence of a vocation for religion. Such were the thoughts which passed through the poor girl's disturbed mind, thoughts which would never have been awakened there, but for the latent effect of influences which had been recently brought to bear upon her. Anne began now further to reflect whether she did not owe it to herself and to truth to be candid with her

mother. She was very candid and truth-loving, and was used to lean to her parent in all matters of importance. She could not be reserved with her, that was impossible ; she must speak.

"Mama," she said, at last, "there is something I so much want to say to you, but do not know how." These words were uttered in a timid tone.

"Surely, dear, you need not be puzzled how to say anything to *me* ; I am certain to understand you," replied her mother, cordially ; but it must be owned her heart beat the while. What was the communication that Anne was about to make ?

"Well, then, it is just this," resumed the daughter ; "I never *could* love Mr. Rochfort."

Anne had no diplomacy about her. Reserved persons seldom have ; when the barrier is levelled, out comes what was working within, without disguise, or qualification, or preparation. Madame d'Héricourt was truly astounded.

"What do you mean, my dear Anne ? who has asked you to love Mr. Rochfort ? Not himself, surely ?"

"Oh, no, indeed ; he never said anything of the sort to me."

"Nor hinted ?"

"Nor hinted," rejoined Anne.

"Then, what do you mean, my child ?"

"I knew you would not understand me."

"But how should I, unless you are more explicit ? Have I ever asked you to love him ?"

"No, Mama," replied Anne ; "but I think you fancy that if I marry I could not make a better choice ; and perhaps not ; but then—but then—I could not ; I am sure I could not ; and so it makes no difference about Mr. Wyndham. I mean *he* is not in the way. It would be just the same if I had never known him, or should never see him again."

Madame d'Héricourt began to have a glimpse of the truth

now, and it was a painful truth : her daughter suspected her of prejudice, and of something very like manœuvring.

“ Dearest Anne,” she replied, after a pause, “ certainly I believe there is no one who would make a better husband than would Eustace Rochfort, and my intimate knowledge of him makes me necessarily place a confidence in him which I cannot at once accord to a stranger ; but you may trust me that this has not influenced me in the advice I gave you about Mr. Wyndham. If your feelings towards Mr. Rochfort would have been precisely the same under other circumstances, so also would my judgment as to the imprudence of any hasty determination with regard to our new acquaintance have been the same in all cases. If you think or suspect otherwise, you wrong me.”

Anne now burst into tears, and, throwing herself at her mother’s feet, buried her head in her lap. It was an unusual outburst of feeling on the part of one so calm. “ Forgive me, dearest mother,” she sobbed out ; “ I was very wrong to say this.”

“ Not wrong to *say* it,” said the mother, laying her hand gently on the fair head, “ but a little wrong to think it, perhaps ; at least I am grieved that you should have thought it. But pray dismiss all such ideas at once. You know that it is no desire of mine even that you should marry. I wish you to have light to choose your state of life. Until you see your way to this choice, it is vain to look for guidance as to any ulterior step. You say you never could like Mr. Rochfort. Be it so. But remember, all this is pure hypothesis, and that God does not give us light about hypothetical cases. Besides, do you not, any way, my dear, feel it to be a little premature to decide such a point as whether you could love a man, before he has so much as hinted that he loves *you* ? ”

Anne looked up, and her face was now suffused with blushes.

"You are right, you are always right, Mama," she exclaimed, rising; and then she threw her arms round her mother's neck and begged her to forgive her.

"I have nothing to forgive," replied Madame d'Héricourt, kissing her tenderly. "And now let us talk no more about this subject."

But if Madame d'Héricourt was not angry with her daughter, she was deeply grieved, and as much vexed as a mind so well tutored to calmness could be. Truly she seemed to have toiled for nothing; for, after all her endeavours and all the precautions she had adopted to shield her children from the world, the world had burst in upon their quiet home, and Anne was to all appearance on the eve of making as unsatisfactory a selection of a partner in life as she could well have done had Mrs. Wyndham's opposite mode of education prevailed in her family, and her daughter had danced and flirted through a London season. Madame d'Héricourt, however, soon stilled all peevish murmuring. She remembered that, after all, we work for God, not for results; with Him therefore she left them, and soon recovered her usual equanimity; still saddened inwardly, it is true, but no longer disturbed.

But were things indeed in so bad a case? Time must show. At any rate this little outbreak of Anne's had been so far salutary that she felt humiliated, and almost ashamed of herself, for the preference which had led her, for the first time in her life, to entertain a reproachful thought of her mother. If Eustace therefore had gained nothing, Algernon, perchance, had lost a little by what had passed on this occasion; at least for the present it had sobered Anne, and thrown her back on more serious thoughts, to which she now resolved most earnestly, according to her mother's desire, to turn her whole mind, committing the future into God's hands.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARTY AND ITS RESULTS.

WEDNESDAY morning came, with its bustle, anxieties, and preparations, in the Berkeley Square household ; and then the evening came, with its flutters and dressings and lightings-up. Mrs. Wyndham, in all the pomp of a lavender silk gown, trimmed with rich lace—for with all her economy the lady always dressed herself expensively for company—was sitting with her two daughters in the front drawing-room, listening for the first knock. She did not, however, sit for long together, but rose from time to time, and sailed about the room uttering her alternate hopes and fears.

“I hope Algernon will come early,” she said ; “he is such a help. Oh, there is a knock.”

“It is not his knock,” said Gertrude.

“No, you wiseacre,” replied Emma ; “did you not hear ? it is a regular footman’s flourish.”

“A one-horse fly,” observed her mother, peeping out.

“Oh dear ! not uncle John, I do hope !” exclaimed Emma. “Is there any box or portmanteau, Mama ?”

“No ; besides he would have written first. It is a lady.”

The dread of an apparition of Uncle John made it almost a relief to Emma when an elderly spinster emerged and walked upstairs as the first guest. The next arrival was of the same character ; persons of that sort always come the earliest—at least so said Emma ; and a hint was given to Gertrude to draw them on into the room and locate them somewhere in not too prominent a situation. This was whispered while the second spinster was getting out of her carriage, and while the first was mounting the staircase, after depositing her shawl in the little room below. Emma

remained as aide-de-camp to her mother near the door. Then Mr. Wyndham made his appearance, and went to talk to the ancient ladies, who were old friends of the family.

Algernon was the next arrival. "No one come yet, I suppose, mother?" he asked, upon entering.

"Yes; two old maids, whom I could have spared as first arrivals,—Miss Martin and Miss Fortescue," whispered the matron; "Gertrude has taken them into the back drawing-room."

"Well, no matter, mother," replied Algernon, smiling, "excellent ladies, both of them; they are great cronies of mine. I shall go and have a little flirtation with them before the plot thickens"; and he moved on. His mother looked after him proudly. "How handsome he is," she said, "and always so pleasant and cheery!"

Algernon certainly *was* handsome, and the additional praise was also deserved. He was, superficially it may be, but not therefore insincerely, kind and pleasant to all, old as well as young, and was generally popular in consequence, being liked far better than either his mother or Emma, who were both deficient in sweetness. Soon numbers began to arrive, and the room became more than sufficiently full, for comfort at least. Emma, after a while, being no longer needed, wandered away from the door. Having exchanged a few words, as she threaded her way, with some of her acquaintance and nodded to others, she made for one of the embrasures, where the window was partially open, declaring it was very hot. Emma liked a window; unlike most women, she was not afraid of a draught, even in her light costume; and then it made such a nice corner; and so a window was always a favourite post with her, and was now selected as usual, in spite of her late cold. Here she stationed herself and remained bandying gay nonsense with one of her partners.

Captain Baines arrived late. This he did intentionally. He knew that his best opportunity for conversation with his beloved would be when the room was full. Before coming upstairs he turned into the refreshment-room for a cup of tea. Here Rachel, assisted by Roper and Mary, was dealing out the fragrant beverage. She was in all her glory, and, by the help of Captain Baines's half-sovereign, considered that she had made herself very bewitching for the occasion. She hastened to help her benefactor, and, as Roper was engaged in attending to two ladies, and Mary was what is vulgarly called "mooning," the Captain ventured to whisper to Rachel that he was sure she was the prettiest girl there, always excepting her young mistress.

"Law ! sir ; you hav'n't been upstairs yet, so how can you know ?" was the damsel's smart rejoinder. But the compliment was nearly as good a retaining-fee, if not quite, as the money had been.

Then Captain Baines sauntered up to the drawing-room, and stood talking to the mistress of the house for a minute ; but her wandering eye proved to him that it was not necessary to bestow more time upon her just then, so he forthwith penetrated into the apartment to look for her who was his real attraction. He soon perceived her in the window recess, leaning carelessly against the closed shutter, and engaged in lively conversation with two gentlemen, laughing and showing her white teeth. There were two, at any rate, so less cause for jealousy ; besides, the Captain, who certainly did not underrate himself or the impression he made upon ladies, did not dread competition. He had soon joined the party, and, after outstaying the two flutterers, by-and-by placed his own back against the opposite shutter. At first Emma's face wore its usual air of animation, usual, at least, in company she liked, but before long an observer might have noticed a blush and a conscious look seldom observable on a countenance not remarkable for bashfulness.

Captain Baines, it might be suspected, was saying something more pointed than common. If the truth must be told, the Captain had come that evening prepared to be "surprised" into an explicit avowal of his sentiments. For reasons best known to himself, he could not well offer himself formally and deliberately for acceptance; but he might be betrayed into confessing his love, and flattered himself that possibly—probably, indeed—the young lady might be equally betrayed into an expression of reciprocal affection, and so an understanding might be established between them.

Things apparently had arrived pretty nearly at this point, for Emma's eyes were actually cast down, and, when at last they were gently raised, they had a very tell-tale look in them. But at that moment they encountered the eyes of her brother Algernon, who was approaching from the opposite side of the room. She was annoyed. Captain Baines was a familiar acquaintance of her brother's, if not a friend; but something instinctively told her that he would not like such an intimacy as was springing up between her and his gay associate; nor was she mistaken in this surmise. Algernon was too quick not to have observed his sister's confusion, although she rapidly recovered herself, and was ready to accost him in a disengaged tone as he stepped forward to join them. Algernon was quite master of his own countenance, and Baines was assurance personified, so that a casual observer would have observed nothing, absolutely nothing, to indicate what was passing in the minds of the trio.

"Well, old fellow," said the Captain; "I suppose you have just turned up?"

"Quite the contrary; I was nearly first in the field." Then, turning to Emma, he said, laughing, "I have just been releasing Gertrude from honourable imprisonment on a sofa, barricaded by the wall on one side,

and by my father, with an old member of Parliament, on the other, busily engaged in discussing the affairs of the nation."

"So like Papa," exclaimed Emma; "he has no thought; that is what makes him such a bad chaperon. But how could Gertrude have been so stupid as to get entrapped there?"

"That I cannot say," replied her brother; "but at any rate the poor girl did not know how to escape, so I made a diversion in her favour, by asking her if she would not like to go down and have a cup of tea, and thereby extricated her. Well, Baines, what are you going to do? Not stay here all evening, I imagine."

"I am only just come," replied the Captain, carelessly. This was hardly true; he had been full half an hour ensconced in that window. "I looked in at Mrs. Trelawney's on the way here, and I think I must just show myself at Mrs. Maitland's by-and-by. She often gives me a seat in her opera-box. The girls are plain and dull, but one owes something to gratitude"; and the Captain smiled. "After doing her, I shall end with the ball at Lady Montgomery's."

"Which is beginning to thin us a little I see," said Algernon, finishing the Captain's sentence.

"Pray do you talk of 'doing' *us*?" asked Emma, archly, as it is called,—an expression of countenance almost peculiar, it would seem, to young women, but which all young women have by no means at command.

"Of course he does; why should he not?" said her brother.

Captain Baines only gave a peculiar smile in return, and the three, as by common consent, moved from the window.

"Well, I shall be going very soon myself," continued young Wyndham.

"Come along with me, then," said his friend; "I have my cab here in waiting."

Captain Baines had lately set up a cab and a tiger. How these expensive articles were paid for it would not have been easy to divine, for any one who was acquainted with the amount of this gentleman's income; but, to let the reader into a secret, it must be known that Frederick Baines was one of those rare examples of a fortunate and prudent gamester which are to be met with now and then. He betted a good deal at races, and played for high stakes at his club, where he was noticed as both a lucky and a skilful hand. He was also an adept at billiards. He lost occasionally, it is true; perhaps it might be surmised that he allowed himself to lose from time to time for the encouragement of opponents; any how, his losses were always moderate, and his gains large. Gaming was, truth to say, his profession, rather than his passion; and so he contrived to live by it, and to live in a certain style. On their way the two intimates talked of some bets which they had in contemplation; at least which Algernon, with the advantage of Baines's advice, had been thinking of hazarding at the approaching Ascot races.

"I'll tell you what, Baines," said young Wyndham, "I think I shall give up this sort of thing. I have no luck, do you see, like others, and am risking money and something more besides."

"Whew! what's in the wind now?" ejaculated Baines; "something more than money? what is that?"

"Reputation," said Algernon, drily. For him, he was at that moment a little out of sorts.

"Reputation!" repeated his astonished companion.

"Yes, reputation in a certain quarter," added Algernon, relaxing a little. "I have my reasons, Baines, for being cautious just now."

"An *affaire de cœur*, of course; and something serious

as its contemplated conclusion," rejoined the Captain. "Well, I will not be curious, but wish you all success in your self-denying tactics."

At that moment they reached Mrs. Maitland's door, and alighted. No further conversation took place between the two friends that night, and neither of them, it must be owned, felt much disposed for any more confidential talk on that occasion.

To return to Emma. She was divided between the gratified state of mind attendant on a declaration, such as she had received from a favoured admirer, and a certain uneasiness in regard to her brother. Algernon had noted something, she felt nearly sure. How did he stand affected towards the matter? Not favourably, she feared. But, supposing he had observed and suspected nothing as yet, the question must come before him at last, and that, indeed, soon; for Emma, be it remarked, had no intention of rejecting, and, indeed, had not rejected, the offer made to her. That young lady did not like her home, and wished to be married; and then she was, or fancied herself, very much in love. Captain Baines might not be rich, yet had he not a cab and a *buttons*? But, however worldly Emma might be—and worldly she was—mercenary views had not as yet developed themselves to any great degree in her heart—partly, perhaps, because she scarcely knew the value of money. She very much liked all that money can purchase—dress, amusement, luxuries,—but she took these things as matters of course in her station of life, and scarcely reflected upon what they might cost. She did not pay the bills, and never looked at the accounts. Her mother talked about them; it bored the daughter, and she thought her mother stingy. She and the man of her heart would never talk of those things; and, after all, she wanted so little; so she said to herself—though no one perhaps wanted more, or cared less to forego what she wanted. And then she had

a vision sometimes of romantic poverty—a cottage with verandah and jessamine and roses, and such good household bread and milk and cream—Devonshire cream, and strawberries! How nice with the man one loved! for even the gay ball-going Emma could indulge in such dreams. Captain Baines was not much of a man for roses and jessamine, yet even he could say a sentimental thing or two, now and then, which looked in that direction.

Yes, Emma intended to carry the matter through. Her parents might object at first, but she was sure she could get over her mother by persuasion, and her father in the end, she hoped, by the help of perseverance and a little grumpiness. But then Algernon—he must be got over too, supposing he took against her, for his opinion was sure to be of the greatest weight with her mother. Brothers are not always easy to persuade, and, as for her grumpiness, he could run away from that. But why should Algernon take against her? Had he not himself introduced Captain Baines to the family? and had he not said he was a “capital fellow”? Besides, was not her brother deeply indebted to her, for the aid she had given him in his own love affair? He could not possibly be so unkind or so ungrateful as to thwart her wishes in return. But what was she to do next? The approved plan, she supposed, was to inform her parents—her mother at any rate; and then, of course, the next step was for the gentleman himself to come forward and apply in person to “Papa” for the ratification of his consent. But Emma thought she had best postpone any confidences until she had seen her lover again. Their conversation had been interrupted by the appearance of Algernon; she had best hear first what the Captain had to say on the score of circumstances. As yet that matter had not been broached, and the affair had not gone beyond its preliminary stage, the province of the heart. She would not even tell Gertrude. Gertrude was unsympathizing on such subjects, and

quite unable to advise. Besides, Emma did not want advice. It was the last thing she ever desired or sought ; in fact, she considered it usually as a great hamper upon free action. And so she resolved to be silent for the present.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MORNING AFTER THE PARTY.

AT the late breakfast of the following morning, the party of the previous night was, of course, the engrossing topic. It was considered on the whole to have been a success. The room had been full ; the better company had quite swamped the dowdy element ; every one had seemed pleased. The Duke of Plumpton had come and stayed an hour. "I think that gratified your father," said Mrs. Wyndham. The Duke was Mr. Wyndham's political patron.

"I don't think much about dukes," replied Emma, "not even if they were royal dukes, for the days are gone by when the Court gave the *ton*. Even rank and fashion do not always go together now. High rank is well enough, but, after all, *fashion* is the thing. I would rather have seen Colonel St. Aubin, for instance, and Lady Manvers, at our party than the whole peerage and the whole royal family to boot." Those two individuals, it may be observed, were amongst the *élite* of the fine world.

"But, as we could not have Colonel St. Aubin and Lady Manvers," replied her mother, "we must be glad to have had his Grace. Surely he is something ; every one could not get him."

"Dear Mama," said Emma, in a provoked tone, though

pretending to laugh, "talking of 'his Grace' is so like the newspapers."

"I wonder, by the bye whether the party will be in the papers already," said the mother, not noticing her daughter's impertinence. She took up the paper lying by her on the breakfast-table. Underneath was a letter which had remained concealed by it. "Oh, here is a letter which I did not observe," exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham. "How stupid of James laying one thing at top of the other!"

"I think you moved it there yourself, Mama, when you first sat down," said Gertrude; but her justification of the footman was lost on her mother, who was examining the address and postmark attentively.

It was a foreign letter. "Boulogne-sur-Mer," she repeated, mechanically.

"Uncle John!" exclaimed Emma, "not a doubt of it. Dear me, I *had* hoped to the last something would turn up to keep him away."

"Nonsense, child!" said her mother, rather tartly; "you make too much of the thing. Certainly I had rather he had not come; but he *is* coming, and there is an end of it."

"I wish there *was* an end of it, but it is only the beginning, Mama. And when is he to be here? Of course before the dinner on Saturday week."

"Yes, he will be here to-morrow. Stop! no—yes—late on Friday afternoon. He remains at Dover for some business with an agent, and comes on by a late train."

"The sooner he comes, however, the sooner the visit will be over. How long does he stay?"

"That he cannot quite say for certain."

"How very uncomfortable!" ejaculated Emma. "We shall not be able even to count the days. The whole thing will seem interminable. I shall feel as if I had Sinbad's old man on my back. People ought to say how long they stay."

"Yes, it is a very good rule," replied her mother; "but after all, a brother, you must recollect, has some right to think himself an exception. And now I must say one thing, my dear Emma: you will oblige me very much by controlling yourself a little when your uncle comes. What is the use of making the worst of a bad job? It will not mend matters, and may do much harm."

"Of course I am not going to tell him that he is a bore," replied Emma.

"Nor show that you think him one, I hope."

Emma shrugged her shoulders.

"He is *my* brother and *your* uncle," reiterated Mrs. Wyndham; "and then—and then it is well to remember he has no natural heir, except a sickly daughter, who wants to go into a convent. Is it right, is it prudent, to disgust him now that he feels perhaps drawn to us?"

"Heaven forbid that he should be drawn to us!" exclaimed Emma, almost gulping down the remainder of her cup of tea. "Drawn to us! you quite frighten me, Mama. I should think that, with such a prospect, I paid too dearly even if he made me his sole heiress."

"He is not likely to do that," rejoined her mother; "but, if you do not care for your own interests, you ought to have some thought for those of others. You might think of your brother Algernon. I am not afraid of your saying anything downright rude to your uncle—you could not think of doing so, and he our guest; but I must say, Emma, since you drive me to it, that you have a sneering way with you, and a hoity-toity manner, when something does not just please you, which I find it at times hard to bear myself."

Emma's lip curled, and her countenance wore that haughty look which it always assumed when she was offended. She was on the point of uttering some impertinence, but checked herself. She remembered how much

she might very soon stand in need of her mother as a friend ; so she could not afford to indulge her temper. Swallowing her resentment, then, she even compelled herself to make something resembling an excuse. "I am sure, Mama, I am very sorry if I have said anything to displease you."

"Well, my dear, never mind ; I am not displeased, only annoyed, you see, at all this, as much as yourself," replied the placable mother, almost confounded and bewildered by the unusual occurrence of an apology from her headstrong daughter.

Mr. Wyndham's entrance cut short the conversation.

"The tea is nearly cold, Papa," said Gertrude ; "you are so very late."

"Make some fresh tea, of course, for your father," said Mrs. Wyndham, who never neglected her husband's comforts at meals ; "ring the bell, Emma ; you are just close to it." That young lady had left the table.

"My love, I want no tea. Just order a little chocolate" ; and Mr. Wyndham took up the paper. He was out of sorts, evidently. Fortunately, consent for the dancing party had been obtained already ; and the cards were in process of being issued, or prospects would have looked bad for the success of an application. "This kind of thing does not suit me at all," said the pater-familias, looking up from his paper, with a victimized air, at his wife. "It does not suit me, Beatrice, at all."

"The hot room has disagreed with you," replied his wife, soothingly ; "you will be better after breakfast."

"I hope so, indeed ; I must be at the House this evening. My head aches confoundedly."

"It must be hot enough there sometimes, I suppose, Papa," observed Emma ; "and you often come home very late besides."

"That is quite another thing," said Mr. Wyndham.

"In fact," rejoined Emma, "you like the one, Papa, and do not like the other."

"I certainly do not like the other," replied the Papa; and he again took up his paper.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, suddenly; "Graham is dead!"

"What! Sir Philip Eagle's friend?" asked the lady, in a voice of dismay; "and we had asked him to dinner, and he was coming, too."

"He will not come, for certain, now," replied her husband. "'Died at his town residence, No. —, Lowndes Square, on Wednesday, the 17th, at nine o'clock p.m., aged 37, the Honourable Bertram Graham, third son of the late Viscount Graham, and brother of the present Viscount.' No mistake about it, you see."

"How very sudden and shocking!" said Mrs. Wyndham.

"Very; it makes a man look about him to hear such things. Why, he is my junior by twelve years!"

"Don't talk in that way, Percy," said Mrs. Wyndham; "it sets me all of a creep."

"And if ever a man looked full of life, and apparently so enjoying life," continued her husband, "it was Graham; so gay, so lively, so hearty, and as great—a what shall I call it?—*gourmet*, I believe is the French epithet, as Eagle himself."

"How terrible," said Gertrude, "for a man like that to be taken in so sudden a way!"

"Of course it is always terrible to die suddenly," said her father; "but if you mean, Gertrude, that Graham was a bad man, you are mistaken. There never was a better fellow; and, if something of a *bon vivant*, I never heard that he ate to excess. It was more that he had a discriminating taste; he was not a glutton, that I know of. Good taste in eating is like taste for music, or anything else. A man has it, or he has it not. It is a faculty, a gift you may

call it, but neither a vice nor a virtue. Neither man nor woman is the better for not knowing a tough bit of meat from a tender, or a well-cooked dish from a heap of garbage."

"I am sure I do not judge him," said Gertrude, meekly.

"But you *were* judging him," said her sister, sharply; "you are always judging people when others praise them, and taking their part when they are really in fault. Indeed, I think you take their part just that you may criticise those who blame them."

"Come, no sparring, girls," said the father.

"Well, it is very sad," resumed Mrs. Wyndham; "but we cannot help it. It will shock Sir Philip a good deal, I suppose. Perhaps he will not dine out so soon: if so, he will write at once, of course; this will put things out terribly."

"Oh, Eagle will come," replied Mr. Wyndham. "I dare say he will attend the funeral, but that will be over. He will come. There will be a vacancy in the borough of Staunton-Brckett in consequence of Graham's death," he continued. "I suppose his brother will come forward. It will be a bore for him, with a dissolution and a general election, probably, next year."

"How are we to fill up his place? we must think of that, you know," said his wife, who had been following her own train of thought.

"Our thinking will not do much good, Beatrice," replied her spouse; "but, I tell you, it is practically a family seat, and Albert Graham will fill it, of course."

"What *do* you mean? Oh, we are at cross purposes, I see. I mean the seat at our table. He leaves a gap, you know."

"Uncle John will fill it," observed Emma, with some malicious pleasure.

"Oh, yes, I forgot; this death drove it out of my head

—I have heard from John. He will be here to-morrow evening."

"John Sanders will be here, will he?" said Mr. Wyndham, taking from his wife's hand the proffered letter. "Well, John Sanders is a very good fellow," he added, laying it down when read; "he will fill Graham's place—that is, in a sense."

"Quite so," said his wife, quickly; "he will fill his place, but not replace Mr. Graham. He was the young and lively element in the party, so full of his amusing anecdotes and jokes, just what suited Sir Philip."

"Yes," replied her husband, "he was light on hand, and did not go on upon a subject too long, which bores Eagle at dinner. I have heard him say so, and that conversation at table ought to be like sauce, the flavouring of a dish, just enough to impart a relish. And then he had travelled, and so has Eagle; and they talked over places together which they had seen. However, he is dead, so there is no use thinking of him now."

"I am trying to recollect if there is any one we could ask who would suit," said Mrs. Wyndham. "Dear me! who is there? Can you think of any one, Emma?"

"If you want a traveller," replied Emma, "there is Mr. Jardine. He belongs to the Travellers' Club, and talks ever so many languages."

"Who is Mr. Jardine?" asked Mr. Wyndham.

"Oh, I dare say you have not noticed him," said his wife; "he was here last night, but we have not known him long. Captain Baines introduced him to us only the other day. He is a great friend of his. I don't think we know him well enough, Emma, to ask him to this sort of dinner; and he looks rather grave, too."

"Captain Baines says he has a great deal of quiet fun about him," replied her daughter, "and makes you laugh without laughing himself."

"Captain Baines is that black whiskerandy who has dined at some of our large spreads, is he not?" asked the poor unconscious Papa.

"The same," replied the equally nescient Mama; "and now, I am thinking, if we ask an additional person we must ask two, or we shall be an uneven number, and that will not suit the table. Another leaf we must have, which just accommodates two more without crowding or sticking people too far asunder. Why should we not ask the Captain as well? and if we ask him, Mr. Jardine being his dear friend, that would smooth over the difficulty of the short acquaintance."

"Ask Baines?" said Mr. Wyndham, in a questioning, debating tone. "Well, I should have thought he was hardly the man—more of a beau for the girls, a kind of dancing-dog."

"Perhaps not *exactly* the sort of man, but he is not a mere dancing-dog, I assure you," replied his wife.

"He would laugh at being considered a dancing-dog, Mama; would he not?" said Emma. "Why, he never condescends to dance a quadrille, and only waltzes."

"He is really a very conversible young man," continued her mother, "and has seen much of the world. He has travelled a good deal, too, I fancy."

"He has been to the Mediterranean, I know," said Emma, "and yachted about—I think, with Lord Selden."

"Eagle is a yachter, or was," rejoined Mr. Wyndham; "so it seems as if he might do well enough—that is, for want of a better; and we must have this Jardine too, must we? Shall we not be too many, my love? The character of this dinner party does not admit of a great number."

"Only ten," replied his wife, "for Gertrude will not dine with us. In so small a party there would be too many of ourselves."

"Just so," said Mr. Wyndham; "and ten must be the outside, or there is an end to general conversation."

And so it was arranged that Captain Baines and his friend were to be asked.

"I shall write a note to him," said the mother, "mentioning, also, our wish that his friend should accompany him; and I shall, of course, enclose a card for Mr. Jardine. I do not know, indeed, where he lives."

The girls now left the breakfast-room, and Mrs. Wyndham sat on with her husband, who proceeded to say a word or two concerning the culinary arrangements.

"And about the cook, the French cook, Beatrice? I am sure we shall not get on without a different *chef de cuisine* on that occasion. Have you secured him? You said you thought you had heard of a good one from our confectioner."

"Yes, and I went myself yesterday and settled everything. M. Pattin will call in the day before to see what must be ordered, and come early the following morning to preside."

"Good!" said her husband, pushing away his plate. "I have no appetite this morning."

Mrs. Wyndham had certainly, as she said, secured a French cook; and his name was Pattin. She had a few days before reluctantly acceded to Mr. Wyndham's pressing desire for getting in a real artist in the cooking profession, when he had to entertain at his table the man who was reckoned to have the most critical taste in the gastronomic line of any lover of good things in London; but Mrs. Wyndham knew that a tiptop performer charged very highly for lending his services. She was too crafty, nevertheless, to urge this objection; for might not her husband retort that he had agreed to the evening party being appended to the dinner, which would cost more than engaging the best French cook for a month; that he did not himself wish for the party, but he *did* wish for a first-

rate cook ? Mrs. Wyndham, however, thought she could so manage matters as to satisfy her husband, and yet meet the claims of economy : she would engage a French cook, certainly, but she would inquire for one whose terms were reasonable. After all, might not such a one really cook as well ? There is so much in a name, and it often covers so little. Besides, were not all Frenchmen born cooks ? And so Mrs. Wyndham engaged M. Pattin.

Yet she had a few misgivings. Could Mrs. Bamber really recommend him ? was her reiterated question to that respectable dealer in sweet things.

“ Well, Ma’am,” replied Mrs. Bamber, thus pushed into a corner, “ of course, if you want to secure a superior good cook, you will do well to engage M. Louis. You are safe in his hands, as I ventured to remark.”

“ But the charge is frightful, monstrous,” rejoined Mrs. Wyndham.

“ It is high, certainly,” said the imperturbable manufacturer of baked meats, “ but he gets it, and is in request at all the fashionable houses.”

“ He is the fashion, in short ; I understand that,” said the lady ; “ but don’t you think sometimes, Mrs. Bamber, that when once a man of that sort is the fashion, he is a trifle overrated ?”

“ Well, I am sure I can’t say, Ma’am.”

Busy people get tired of irresolutions, and Mrs. Bamber was becoming a little weary of being urged to giving it as her opinion that M. Pattin, at half the charge, was likely as a performer to equal the great M. Louis. Mrs. Wyndham perhaps perceived as much ; so, preparing to depart, she only added, in a deprecatory tone, “ Still, you think M. Pattin can send up a satisfactory dinner, a good, eatable, and creditable dinner ?”

“ I should not have named him, Ma’am, if I had reason to think otherwise,” rejoined the confectioner ; and Mrs.

Wyndham, conscious she could extract no more, gave the final assent, and left the shop.

"I hope he will satisfy Papa," Emma had observed, when informed of this arrangement. "Perhaps it would have been better to get a regular 'top-sawyer,' and then, if things went wrong, you could not be blamed. Papa will be *so* cross if Sir Philip turns up his nose at his dinner, and that will make him dislike the party afterwards still more."

"But things cannot go wrong," retorted her mother. "You are quite safe with a French cook, and recommended, too, by one who is a judge."

"Only recommended as second-best, Mama. Besides, it is quite a fallacy to think all French cooks are good performers. Don't you remember that M. Roussel, who was at Grandpapa's at Chiseldon one Christmas? I recollect, when the housekeeper told him to make a Christmas pie, he flew in a passion and said, 'I make pie? Pie make itself.' In fact, he knew nothing about the matter."

"Christmas pies are purely English dishes," replied her mother. "How should a regular Frenchman know how to make one?"

"Oh, but his soups, Mama! They were awful! I wonder you do not remember. I used to hear you and Papa complain of them."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Wyndham, rather pettishly, "I don't know why you throw cold water on everything."

"I won't throw cold water on M. Pattin's soups at any rate," said Emma, laughing; and then she added, in a pacifying tone, "perhaps, after all, he may be quite up to his work; and at all events he will not be called upon to make a Christmas pie."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOVER AND THE BROTHER.

IN the course of that Thursday, the day after the party, Emma received a letter. It did not come by post, though it had a postal stamp upon it. It was presented to her by Rachel, who remarked that she had accidentally met Captain Baines. "He was going to post this letter," said the hand-maid; "but, when he saw me, he stopped and gave it to me, bidding me put it into your hands."

Emma looked up colouring: "Gave it to you?" she said.

"Yes, Ma'am, and you may *quite* trust me."

These words (which had been uttered once before) grated on the ears of her young mistress, and, with one of her haughty looks, she replied, "I really don't know what you mean."

"Well, it doesn't matter," said Rachel, going away with a smile on her face. "Another time I shall know."

Emma called her back; she saw that she was in the girl's power, and was afraid of making an enemy of one who could injure her. "Rachel," she said, "I am not finding any fault with you. You did quite right to act as you were directed. I only meant, it puzzled me why, and I thought—that is, I did not understand,"—and then Emma, fairly bewildered as to what she should say, gave up the attempt to say anything, and, putting the letter in her pocket, left the room.

Rachel remained victorious. "She will want me yet, and not be too proud to own it," muttered to herself the would-be *confidante*.

Emma meanwhile put on her bonnet and shawl, which lay on one of the drawing-room sofas ready for use, seized

on a novel, and went out to sit in the square. There, on one of the benches, and with the Captain's letter on the leaf of the open book, she eagerly perused its contents, an interesting page in the novel of her own life—three pages, indeed, for there was a great deal in this the first love-letter which Emma had ever received. The reader shall be favoured with a glance at its contents.

“My own dearest,

“May I not call you so after the one precious word which dropped from your lips last night, and which has made sweet music in my ears ever since?”—How nice, how pretty! Emma read that line twice over. “Long ago should I have manifested those sentiments which I have been led to betray prematurely, I know not how—well, no matter, you know all now; indeed you must have known it before, but I had restrained my tongue, until I should feel myself in a position to come forward to your parents and avow myself a candidate for your hand. I must explain. I have myself a competence of my own, sufficient to meet my own requirements; more, indeed, than sufficient, perhaps even what might content us both; for should we not be all in all to each other? But fathers and mothers look to settlements and prospects,—do they not, dearest? all very proper in parents. Well, I have large expectations from an uncle—more than expectations, I may say, for he has as good as declared me formally his heir. You will observe, however, that, as these intentions entirely depend on his good will, I am bound in discretion, if not in duty, to consult him when thinking of any serious step in life. He is quite able to make a settlement, and I need not say that he could but commend my choice; but the fact of the matter is, he is in no hurry for me to marry; he looks to me for everything, leans on me; and, in short, fancies that if I had a wife, he should have me less at his beck, and see less of me, and so forth. Old bachelors are like that, you know :

they have to be humoured. I have no doubt of bringing him round by a little diplomacy ; and when he sees my Emma, I know he will be almost as much in love with her as I am myself. But he has been lately suffering from a severe attack of gout, and I have felt this to be an unpropitious moment for broaching any subject likely to excite him. As soon as he is sufficiently recovered, you may rest assured I shall lose no time in speaking to him. Until then it will be wise—will it not?—to postpone any application on my part to Mr. Wyndham ; and, if I might venture to offer advice, I should say that perhaps it might be as well that you should not as yet mention even to your mother how matters stand between us. But my dearest will know best how to act.” Then followed a few love passages, which, as they would not interest the reader as much as they did Emma, may be omitted.

She closed the precious document, after two or three perusals, and consigned it to her pocket. Needless to say, the poor girl believed every word it contained. Yet there was hardly a syllable of truth in it from one end to the other, beginning with the writer’s assertion that he had been surprised into a premature betrayal of his affection. He had an uncle, it is true, an unmarried uncle, who lived down in Yorkshire ; but, so far from having reason to entertain expectations in that quarter, Frederick Baines knew very well that his relative considered him as a precious scamp, who did him no credit, and whom he never desired to see. It was also true that he liked and admired Emma Wyndham very much, and meant to obtain her as his wife, if he could manage it ; and this was pretty nearly all there *was* of truth in the letter. The first step towards success in his design was to inveigle her into a private engagement ; and this object he may now be said to have achieved. Emma had no scruples about concealing what had passed from her mother. She had never been in the

habit of consulting her out of filial duty; she had little of respect in her nature, and a slight hold of principles of conduct; considering the deficiencies of her education, this was scarcely surprising. Yet she had a certain affection for her mother, and made her occasional confidences when it suited her; but they were optional confidences, and she treated her parent as she might any other confidant, that is to say, she communicated or withheld her little secrets at pleasure. On this occasion the confidence would certainly be withheld. Emma took a turn round the Square, then sat down awhile to indulge in pleasant dreams, and, after consuming about an hour in this agreeable occupation, she went into the house again.

In the drawing-room she found no one but her brother, who was lolling on a sofa. Somehow she felt sorry to see him. "I did not know you were here, Algernon," she said, with assumed ease of manner; "where are my mother and Gertrude?"

"I was going to ask you that question myself. I thought you were all out together, as I found no one at home."

"They have gone somewhere, I suppose," said his sister. "I have been in the Square for the last hour," she added, as she threw her novel carelessly on the table.

"Dull work, spending an hour in that pen, I should think."

"I took my book; in fact, I wanted a mouthful of air. It was so very hot last night at our party. How did you think it went off, Algernon?"

"O, all very well, I suppose; rather too full, of course, at one time. What do the old birds say?"

"Mama is pleased, but Papa seems very *piano* this morning. He never likes parties, you know, and particularly a party at home."

"Because he knows he has to pay for that. At other

people's houses he, at any rate, puffs and perspires gratis."

"O, Algernon, what a funny notion!" Emma was beginning to get at her ease once more. "Papa was shocked too, this morning," she continued, "at seeing Mr. Graham's death in the papers. He was going to dine with us Saturday week."

"That made it more shocking, of course," replied Algernon. "I saw his death in the *Times* myself."

"And O, Algernon, only think of my forgetting to tell you, Uncle John arrives to-morrow; actually arrives—such a bore!"

"I don't think he will do you much harm, Emma," replied her brother, who again relapsed into a sort of absent manner, which she thought she had previously noticed, and which gave her some alarm. Was he going to say something about Captain Baines, or what?

He *was* going to say something, and was turning in his mind how to introduce it; at last he plunged *in medias res* without introduction. "Em," he said, "I wanted to give you just a caution about Baines—I mean you had better take care to do nothing that may draw attention. He is well enough to dance with, and so on, but just avoid anything which may look like a flirtation."

"And why is not Captain Baines as good to flirt with as any other gentleman?" asked Emma, colouring. "What's amiss with him? Did not you introduce him to us yourself?"

"Yes, I introduced him; he asked me to do so. How could I well refuse, if he wished it?"

"But you said nothing against him at that time. I remember you even said he was 'a capital fellow.'"

"And so he is—only a little fast; so it will be well not to make yourself particular with him."

"Really, Algernon, I don't know what you mean. I am

not aware that I ever make myself *particular* with any one," said Emma, with some temper; "and how am I to go and change my manner suddenly to an acquaintance who has given me no offence?"

"My good girl," replied her brother, "I do not want to say anything to distress you, or to find any fault with you. You really might, and I am sure you must, understand me. Neither have I any wish that you should show Baines that you desire to avoid him; but, were I you, I would take care not to get into corners with him, or let him get you into corners. Surely this is not so difficult. I should be very sorry that you were talked of in connection with him."

Emma was silent a moment, and then said, "But if he is so very fast as—all that, why do *you* make a friend of him, Algernon?"

"That is a different thing altogether. He will do me no harm."

"I do not know that," said his sister, "if it is as you say; and, if Captain Baines is so very fast, by which I conclude you mean that he is a man of bad character, I fancy that a report of your intimacy with him may do you no particular good with that rigorous lady, your contemplated mother-in-law." This was meant for a telling shot.

"That is *my* look-out," said Algernon, with a glance of displeasure not often seen on his face. "Besides, I never said that Baines was a man of bad character. You know very well what I did say, and you have quite wit enough to understand me, if you choose. If you do not choose, I cannot help it. You must go your own way, and I shall go mine. I have meant to do you a kindness." So saying he took his hat, but as he was leaving the room he turned back, with his hand on the door, and said in his usual careless tone, "Tell my mother I shall perhaps dine here to-day, and at any rate drop in in the evening."

Emma stood a moment where she was, and her thoughts

were not agreeable. Algernon was more her enemy in this affair of her heart than she had even feared. What was he going to do now? Would he caution her mother against Captain Baines? Was that what he meant by going his own way? Would it not have been better to have spoken him fair, and propitiated him? But she could not have done this without giving up her lover, unless she had been prepared to play the part of a gross hypocrite; and this was repugnant to her disposition. Nor was she at all inclined to give up her lover though she had heard he was "fast." Algernon was fast himself, she was sure; and perhaps her Frederick was about as fast. But then it was only youth and gaiety; men settled down when they married. She did not like slow people; and her thoughts reverted to Mr. Rochfort as her ideal of a slow man. No, she never could like a slow man; and then she took out the Captain's letter and read it again. It was very sweet to her.

"How very much pleasanter," she said to herself, "is a lover than a brother!" and that was about the conclusion which Emma arrived at from the morning's incident.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAPTAIN AND HIS FRIEND.

THIS same Thursday which brought Emma Captain Baines's love-letter brought the Captain, later in the day, an invitation to dinner from Emma's mother. He was sitting near the open window of his comfortable lodging in Piccadilly—for there are some very cosy lodgings in that

crowded thoroughfare for those who do not mind the interminable roll of wheels, and Captain Baines did not mind it in the least. The rooms were of what has been called the pianoforte shape; the second, rather smaller than the front one, with which it communicated by folding-doors, having inside it a third much smaller apartment. There the Captain used to smoke his cigar—with, or without his landlady's permission, I cannot say, but I rather think without it. Opposite to him at the moment of which I am speaking sat another young man, apparently his senior by two or three years. He was less well-looking than the Captain, had sandy hair, reddish whiskers, and a countenance which said nothing, either in general or in particular. He was, in fact, nearly plain, for he had no good points, and not quite plain, because he had no specially bad ones. The knock of the postman had just been heard at the door, and presently the girl came up with a letter, which she handed to Baines.

"Here is something which concerns you, Jardine," he said, upon opening it and perceiving the enclosed card, which he tossed across the little table between them, and then read his own note out loud :—

"DEAR CAPTAIN BAINES,

"Will you dine with us on Saturday, the 27th, to meet Sir Philip Eagle and a few other friends—quite a small party? We shall be so glad if your agreeable friend, Mr. Jardine, will accompany you. I enclose you a card for him, as I am not acquainted with his address.

"Yours very sincerely,

"BEATRICE WYNDHAM."

"You see, Jardine, you will be expected to make yourself agreeable."

"If I thought so, I would not go," replied his com-

panion. "I hate having to make efforts. I hope, Baines, you have not been puffing me off as an agreeable talker. Perhaps you did, as an excuse for introducing me the other day, as you could not say I was good-looking; and, if you had, there was my face to give a silent contradiction."

"Not I; I think I said you were a great traveller. But you will go, will you not?"

"Yes, I shall go, for the same reason that I wished to know them."

"And what was that?"

"Well, to confess the truth, I was rather struck with the pretty face of one of the girls."

"The deuce you were!" replied Baines. "Which?—for they are both pretty."

"The fair one, the youngest. The other is handsome, but *she* is pretty."

"I will give you leave to appropriate *her*, Jardine."

"By which I suppose you mean that you intend to appropriate the other. I saw a little flirting going on."

"Yes, I mean to appropriate the other, if I can."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, seriously."

"Well, then, Baines, I must say I think you—what shall I say?—very foolish."

"You were going to say 'a great fool,'" replied his friend, laughing; "and, if you were, you are welcome to your opinion. Maybe I am, but I suppose every man makes a fool of himself once in his life at any rate."

"To go and hamper yourself with a wife, with your tastes and habits and love of independence!" continued Mr. Jardine. "It would be all very well if she were an heiress. That would be sacrificing oneself for a consideration; but here is a girl with no fortune, I imagine."

"Well, Jardine, I like the girl. I never liked any woman half as much; and then she is not such a beggar

as you suppose. Wyndham has no great fortune of his own, but Mrs. Wyndham, though, I understand, she was not a person of any birth, had a good one—perhaps some thirty thousand pounds—and I have reason to know that her fortune is settled on the younger children. Algernon will only have what his father may be able to leave.”

It may be well here to observe that the Captain was entirely mistaken in all this, with the exception of the amount of Beatrice’s fortune. That fortune, so far from being settled on the younger children, had not been settled on the children at all. The gentleman, having been misinformed as to this circumstance, had probably been confirmed in his error by some casual remark of Algernon’s as to his dependence on his father.

“But supposing you are correct in your ideas,” said his friend, “you will have to content yourself at present with what Mr. Wyndham may choose to give his daughter; and are you sure he would give her a farthing if she set her affections on you? Do you think you could stand the parental scrutiny? I guess not. And as for waiting for that same fifteen thousand pounds, of course it is settled on the mother first; and, no doubt, the father would have it for his life, if he survived. They are both comparatively young, and Mrs. Wyndham, particularly, looks as likely to live forty years longer as any woman I ever saw—longer than you, Baines.”

“I dare say,” replied the Captain. “All very good reasoning, I have no doubt; but, you see, I am just in that mood which does not listen to reason, the sort of mood in which Samson was, I fancy, when his father and mother gave him such excellent advice, and he only answered, ‘Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well.’ That was all he could say, poor fellow.”

“I should not have thought you knew so much of your Bible. You will have to get her for yourself, I suspect.

She is under age ; so, if you fain *will* tie yourself to her, you must persuade her to run away with you."

"So I am thinking," replied the Captain coolly. "Come, Jardine," he added, after a pause, "let us smoke a cigar" ; and the two companions adjourned to the inner-room, where Baines became more confidential, as Jardine dropped playing the part of monitor, and had soon acquainted him with the exact position of affairs between him and his ladylove.

The little incidents of this Thursday which have a bearing on our story are not yet exhausted ; so we must now return to Berkeley Square, and listen to another scrap of conversation.

Algernon had said he would dine with his parents or drop in in the evening, but he really intended to drop in some quarter of an hour before the dinner-time, when he should probably find his mother alone, who generally came down first. The girls were almost always late, putting off going up to dress to the last minute. He found his mother, as he expected, and, after affectionate greetings, Mrs. Wyndham began naturally to speak of the party.

"Yes, it went off capitally," replied her son. "I looked in at Mrs. Maitland's afterwards, and certainly we bore away the palm here."

"I wish, Algernon, you had been able to dine with us," said his mother, "on Saturday week."

"I really do not believe my father wanted me," he replied. "I cannot endure that impertinent epicure, Eagle, and my father knows I cannot. Besides, I am engaged now. Of course I shall come afterwards. By the bye, mother, there was something I just wished to say to you—it is only for your private ear. It is about Emma : there appeared to me to be something of a flirtation going on between her and Baines the other night. Don't you think you could quietly check this sort of thing?"

“Emma *will* flirt—I cannot help it,” replied the mother ; “but she flirts with so many that it is of less consequence. People see that nothing is meant. She is very lively, and it passes my powers to restrain her.”

“But I am not so sure that something is not meant this time. She shows Baines a marked preference, I should say ; and that would never do.”

“Do! No, indeed! I never thought of such a thing, Algernon,” exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham. “You quite frighten me.”

“Don’t alarm yourself, mother ; it is not so bad as all that. I did not fear that Emma was thinking of marrying Baines, or, indeed, Baines of marrying her ; but, you see, he is what the world calls a fast man, and he has not got a penny to make up for any demerits. A regular flirtation with a man of that sort is a disadvantage to a girl, if it was only that it keeps better people off.”

“I quite see that danger with Emma,” replied his mother ; “but she will not hear a word on the subject. I must say, however, that I never observed anything particular in the case of Captain Baines, who really has seemed to talk to me as willingly as to the girls ; and I have found him very pleasant and conversible, I must say.”

“So he is,” said Algernon ; “still he is just that sort of man who, if he got intimate, would stand in the way of Emma’s marrying ; and she is just the sort of girl who would allow him to do so.”

“I see. Emma, in fact, has a horror of being supposed to have an eye to money ; and this makes her often quite chuff to acquaintance who might be suitable matches ; and she will positively chill them off and flirt with some whipper-snapper, to show them, and me too, that she is not thinking of them.”

“A standing flirtation, like this with Baines, just comes to hand conveniently for that purpose,” said Algernon ;

“that is about what I mean.” He *did* mean a great deal more, but did not wish to betray the amount of his fears—“Any way,” he continued, “it would have been better, mother, to have left Baines in his place as a ball and party acquaintance ; it was only as such that I introduced him, and he does well enough for that, for he goes everywhere. But, you see, you have asked him to dinner more than once, and this leads to a sort of intimacy of which he avails himself at other times ; and this is by no means desirable.”

“And I am sorry to say I have asked him to dinner again for the Saturday. Mr. Graham’s death left a vacancy, and we could think of no one else.”

“That is unfortunate,” said Algernon.

“And I have asked his friend, Mr. Jardine, also,” added Mrs. Wyndham.

“What ! Jardine ? asked Jardine, mother ? I am sorry for that, indeed. Why did not you consult me first ? I saw him here the other night, but supposed he had only got a card through Baines. He is not at all a man to cultivate ; a regular blackleg, Jardine is.”

“Oh, dear ! what shall I do ?” exclaimed his mother. “Don’t tell your father, Algernon.”

“I will not say a word to my father.”

“And is Captain Baines a blackleg too ?”

“Oh, mother, you do so run away with a thing ! There is no harm in Baines ; he is a gay sort of man, and all that, but he is no disgrace to any company.”

“But the other is !”

“Not so fast, mother ; you do go so fast, and jump to such conclusions. Jardine is not so bad as that either, but he is not so nice a fellow as Baines. He is a great deal on the turf, and lives mostly with persons who have the same pursuits. He is not one whom I am tempted myself to get intimate with ; so, of course, he is hardly fit for an intimate of yours. But I dare say he is quite as respectable,

morally speaking, as that fellow Eagle ; only Eagle has money and position, and this poor devil, Jardine, has not."

"What can I do now?" said Mrs. Wyndham despairingly.

"Why, nothing at all, mother ; only do not ask him again ; nor Baines either—this season, at any rate. And now, don't betray me, or Em would take it unkindly ; and please do not look as if I had been telling you some awful secret. Emma is as sharp as a needle, and will suspect there is something wrong."

Mrs. Wyndham, accustomed to obey her son, made an effort, and smoothed her brow, as the girls entered. Algernon had risen, and was standing on the rug looking perfectly disengaged, so that there was nothing in the behaviour of either to awaken any active suspicion in Emma's mind. Mr. Wyndham was absent, having gone to the House, and the evening went off, externally at least, with ease and cheerfulness ; but none of the party were well at ease internally. Mrs. Wyndham had, so to say, several pins sticking in and pricking her. This communication of Algernon's concerning Emma pricked her very sharply, not to speak of the annoyance of having asked a questionable character to dinner. What if Mr. Wyndham should get a hint in some quarter or other of Mr. Jardine being a blackleg ? She had asked a blackleg to dinner—Mrs. Wyndham hardly realized how much might be implied in that term, but it was very horrible ! And the dinner itself—she was not without uneasiness on that score. What if M. Pattin should prove a second Roussel in abilities ? Better have trusted to Tyrell, which indeed, she would herself have much preferred. The dancing *soirée*, again, would probably cost more than anticipated, certainly more than her husband anticipated ; and he would be proportionally dissatisfied. And for what purpose would all this expense

have been incurred? Perhaps only to give Emma an additional opportunity for flirtation with the gay Captain! Add to these various subjects of annoyance the prospect of her brother John's arrival the next evening. For truly the thought of this visit was as unpleasant to her as it was to Emma, although prudence, not to say propriety, bade her put as good a face upon the thing as she could, since it was inevitable; and worldly wisdom had even suggested the notion of turning the infliction to some profitable account. Still she disliked the thought of the visit mortally.

Verily, Mrs. Wyndham's state of mind was far from enviable. Compared with it Madame d'Héricourt's mental disturbance, even at its worst, was peace. She, at least, could take her troubles to God, and seek relief and consolation where they are always to be found. Such an idea never occurred to Mrs. Wyndham, poor soul; and her troubles, indeed, were generally of that worldly character which renders them rather obstacles than incentives to prayer. Yet Mrs. Wyndham *did* say her prayers, morning and evening; and, if some calamity had overtaken her, I believe she would have sought resignation and patience from Heaven.

Algernon, with all his carelessness of temper and natural cheerfulness, was worried; and worry bored him. He was worried because his own love affair was at a sort of dead lock; and he was worried at his sister's flirtation. He was also worried not a little at having cumbered himself with an intimate who had himself intimates of doubtful reputation. Emma spoke the truth when she suggested that Madame d'Héricourt would draw unfavourable conclusions if cognizant of this fact—"Dis moi qui tu hantes," &c., as the French proverb says. And then Anne was very unlike Emma; she would, he was sure, follow her mother's leadings like a lamb; she would cast him off, and, no doubt, end by marrying "that chap with the repulsively sensible

countenance." Algernon hated Eustace Rochfort, as he thought of this climax, and Frederick Baines almost as much, at whose door he laid these not improbable calamities.

Emma had her own inward discomforts. She saw through the superficial cheerfulness of her brother, and perceived he was not in his best humour. He was the same to her as usual outwardly, but she was sure he had not dismissed the morning's conversation from his memory. Her own affairs had almost driven Uncle John out of her head, but not quite; and as his impending visit flashed on her recollection occasionally, the prospect added discontent to uneasiness. Even Gertrude, though she had no special subject of anxiety of her own, was depressed. Emma had been lately in an uncomfortable state of temper—alternately in excited spirits and in a snappish mood; and Gertrude had had to bear the brunt of all. Then the frequent family discussions about trifles were distressing to her gentle nature. She was out of place where she found herself. She was one who wanted guidance, and would have desired it; but though by no means of a contemptuous disposition, she had a keen sense of the evil existing in others, and was very much alive to the faults of those with whom she was brought in contact. Hence she held very cheap any such guidance as she could receive at home, and lived apart with her own crude ideas; keeping peace with all, but harmonizing with none. Such an attitude told on her spirits very often, for her spirits, save when enlivened by amusement, were not naturally high, and this evening they had fallen below the usual mark. The fatigue and heat of the previous night—for Gertrude was not strong—had their share in lowering them, no doubt; but, at any rate, so it was. She was very low, and took no trouble to rouse herself, leaving the conversation to the other three, who were always well able to keep it up without her assistance, and allowing herself to think of other things—a bad, because

selfish habit, in company, unless practised, as it may be sometimes, from higher motives than, it must be confessed, actuated poor Gertrude.

The evening was not prolonged. Algernon left early, promising to dine the next day, in order to meet his uncle. After he was gone, Mrs. Wyndham yawned, and said she was sleepy; the girls were the same; so, all being agreed on that point, they retired for the night; and thus closed the eventful day after the party.



CHAPTER XIX.

UNCLE JOHN.

It is now about half-past six in the afternoon of the following day; and when wheels pass through the Square ears listen and eyes peer out of the window. If it be a cab, it is watched: does it contain John Sanders? No, it does not; it passes on.

"I have ordered dinner at our usual hour," said Mrs. Wyndham: that hour was half-past seven in summer. "John is sure to be arrived by that time; and I shall go and dress now, to be ready. Try and be down, girls," she added; "we had best be all here to . . . to"—she was going to say "welcome," but it stuck in her throat—"to receive him." And Mrs. Wyndham did dress, and was down in the drawing-room by a quarter-past seven.

After a while she was joined by her husband. "Well, Sanders ought to be here by this time," he said; "where are the girls? They are never punctual."

"I begged them to be so to-day," replied his wife. "Oh, here they are!"

"It is close upon half-past seven," said Emma, as she entered. "I think *he*"—she did not like calling the expected individual her uncle more often than she could help—"I think *he* must have missed the train. If so——"

Thy wish, Emma, was father to that thought: but before she could complete her sentence a cab drew up at the door.

Mr. Wyndham went down-stairs, and his wife hastened to the window. "Yes, it is John," she said, "grown bigger and older," as a burly figure emerged from the cab, and a shabby portmanteau, which looked as if it had seen much service, was dragged down from the top by the cabman, whom the new-comer waited to pay.

Mrs. Wyndham hesitated a moment, and then thought it well to follow her husband, and go as far, at least, as the landing-place to welcome her brother. He had already received a cordial shake of the hand from Mr. Wyndham, and Mrs. Wyndham played her part as well as could be expected. She descended the first flight, and greeted him with a kiss, accompanied by a respectable show of sisterly affection.

Meanwhile the two girls had lingered behind. "I suppose," said Emma, "we are not expected to rush out into his arms?"

"We must kiss him, of course," replied Gertrude.

"I am sure *I* shall not kiss him," said her sister. "What *he* may do I cannot help."

At that moment the objectionable uncle entered, and stood in his proper person before them. "So these are the two little girls, Beatrice," he said, as Mrs. Wyndham called them forward; "well-grown lasses now." Uncle John had not varied his epithets in these past twelve years, it will be seen, and he proceeded to bestow a hearty kiss on each of his nieces. "Of course I should not have known either of them," he continued; "as for you, Beatrice—yes,

I should have known you ; you wear very well, I must say, but are grown uncommon lusty."

"My wife will not like to be called lusty, I can tell you," said Mr. Wyndham.

"What's amiss with the word ? well, stout, then, if she prefers that, but lusty gives it better. She is spread, and filled out," and he made a gesture expressive of expansion. "I am grown lusty myself ; and I can tell you," he added, "I am precious hungry ; of course you have dined ; but some bread and cheese will do very well for me ; nothing better."

"My dear fellow, we do not keep your Sicilian hours ; we are going to dinner immediately," said his host ; "so Beatrice had better show you to your room. Don't think of dressing."

"All right ; you will take me as I am ; that will suit me best. I will just wash my hands."

"You won't dislike, I hope, being on the ground floor," said his sister ; "but we have unfortunately so little spare accommodation."

"Not a bit ; indeed, I prefer it ; it saves legs. I hope I have not inconvenienced or put you out in any way ?"

"Not in the least," said Mr. Wyndham, "we are very glad to see you here" ; and he and his wife proceeded to escort the guest down to his apartment.

On the stairs they met Algernon, just arrived. He was duly introduced, and behaved very well, as he always did. He was not troubled with Emma's fastidiousness, though he had full as good, not to say better taste than his sister, and he had far more good-nature. So this kind of thing came very easy to him.

"Well, Algernon," said Emma, as he entered the drawing-room, "what do you think of him ?"

"Of our uncle ? why, I had but a glance at him. He has got a broad, good-humoured, bold sort of face, with a dash of shrewdness, and a few smallpox marks. That

is about what I noticed. What do *you* say ? for you saw more of him, I suppose. Does he fulfil your expectations, Em ?”

“Pretty nearly. He is very like some one, I cannot think who—O, I know ! he is like caricatures I have seen of Dan O’Connell.”

“He would consider that a compliment, I expect,” replied Algernon.

“Something between that and a prize-fighter in appearance, I should say.”

“O dear !” said Gertrude ; “I am sure he looks very kind and amiable.”

“Do you know, Algernon,” continued Emma, without taking any notice of her sister’s remark, “he told Mama she was grown lusty. She did not like it, I can tell you.”

Algernon laughed heartily.

At this moment Mrs. Wyndham reappeared. Oh, what *is* this nasty smell in the room ?” she exclaimed.

“It is my uncle’s boots,” said Emma ; “cheap blacking smells like that ; I observed it at once.”

“The smell of blacking always makes me sick,” said Mrs. Wyndham.

“It has the same effect on Gertrude,” said Emma.

“It is really pestiferous,” continued her mother. “Burn a pastille, Emma ; do.”

“With the help of that, mother, I hope you and Gertrude will not faint,” said Algernon ; “but I am afraid the mixture won’t improve matters.”

“And then my uncle will come back with his boots to refresh the smell,” added Emma ; “for he is not to dress.”

“But he is going to change his boots ; I heard him say so,” replied Mrs. Wyndham.

“That is a comfort, at any rate,” said Algernon. “But a lusty dame like you, mother, ought not to be so delicate.” Mrs. Wyndham could not help smiling. Her darling son

had always the power to restore her good humour. "Well, it is better to be lusty than skinny," he continued; "and my uncle, doubtless, uses the word in the old English sense, when it certainly meant nothing uncomplimentary."

John Sanders had soon finished his toilet arrangements. Dinner was announced, and the party descended to the dining-room.

It will be remembered, or perhaps it will not be remembered, that it was Friday. "This is the best *soupe maigre* I ever ate," said the worthy John, noisily supping it up, like a hungry man as he was; and then he committed the solecism, in Emma's eyes, of being helped a second time. To her surprise, her brother followed his uncle's example; probably, as she concluded, from the good-natured civility habitual to him, and in order that his uncle might not be left to eat alone.

"Yes, it is not a bad soup by any means," he said; "you would scarcely know it was a *soupe maigre*."

"Very few English cooks know how to make a vegetable soup with any flavour in it," rejoined the uncle.

"Ours is certainly not a French cook," said Mr. Wyndham, laughing.

"But really she is not a bad performer, as I often say," observed his wife.

"Yes, my dear; you *do* say it very often; begging your pardon, I am almost tired of hearing you say it."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating," said Sanders. "She can certainly make a good soup."

"And she is such a good woman," added Gertrude.

"That is not much to the purpose," retorted Mr. Wyndham; "many excellent women are very indifferent cooks."

"But I do not know about its being nothing to the purpose, father," interposed his son. "Cooks, not seldom, drink, and are dishonest; so the moral character is something."

"But Gertrude means a great deal more than that," said Emma; "she thinks we have got a saint for a cook."

"Indeed!" exclaimed her uncle. "I think I must visit your kitchen department, and make acquaintance with this treasure to-morrow."

"I don't at all mean, Beatrice, that Tyrell is a bad cook," said Mr. Wyndham, who was afraid he had annoyed his wife, and, to do him justice, was always sorry if he suspected that he had done so; "only sometimes not quite up to the mark."

The re-entrance of the servants cut short the conversation. When there was only a family party Mr. Wyndham did not like much waiting at table. A wire passed under the carpet from the table to the bell, so that he could ring when the courses had to be changed, or when anything was required. I do not think the servants liked the plan. They said it gave them quite as much trouble, or more; and then—they did not hear the conversation. But this was precisely the object of the master of the house, who did not like being put out of his way, and grew tired of being told afterwards of indiscretions he had committed, and of hearing significant scrapes of the throat from his wife, of which the butler and the footman knew the import as well as he did himself.

The fish was done as much justice to by the hungry traveller as the soup; and then some cutlets were taken round, to which Mr. Wyndham helped himself.

"Hollo! Wyndham; it is Friday!" shouted his guest. "What are you about?"

"He has got a dispensation," muttered his wife, in an uneasy tone.

"Yes, I have got a general dispensation," added Mr. Wyndham, smiling carelessly. He did not say, as he might have said, that he took it himself; for, if truth must be told, he had never asked for a dispensation; nor, indeed,

had he the smallest grounds for making such a request. His health was good, and he was as strong as most people ; yet it was a well-understood thing in the house that Mr. Wyndham never abstained. No questions were asked, and the fact had ceased to attract attention.

John Sanders eyed him and then eyed his sister. "And have you a dispensation too, Beatrice?" he asked.

"Oh, no, we abstain ; that is, Emma and I do always. Gertrude has been ordered meat. The doctor says it is essential for her."

"That is all right," rejoined the uncle ; "that is all right, in one sense. I am sorry she is not strong. It has been a great trouble to my Teresa not to be able to fast, nor even always to abstain."

"We were so sorry to hear she was so delicate," said his brother-in-law. "Come, you are drinking nothing, Sanders ; what wine do you like after your soup ? Sherry?"

"No ; that's too strong for me."

"Then I can recommend you some of my hock ; it is excellent."

"No, I think I shall stick to my own manufacture and constant beverage, Marsala ; no better stomachic than that. Here's to your better health, Wyndham" ; and he nodded and winked at his host.

"Thank you, Sanders, but I don't think there is much amiss with me."

Mrs. Wyndham felt fidgety : why did her husband say that ? John Sanders was a strict Catholic ; why scandalize him unnecessarily by not accepting the implied excuse of health ? Mrs. Wyndham was also dreading the further and more pernicious scandal of Algernon's probable transgression of the Church's precepts. For him there could not possibly be any excuse ; nevertheless the son was in the habit of availing himself of the same species of dispensation as was the father. He seldom, it is true, dined with

his family on Fridays, but his mother had noted the fact, though, in her weak indulgence, she had refrained from making a comment or asking a question. When she begged him to come and meet his uncle, she had forgotten the day ; for, anxious as she was that her son should make a favourable impression in that quarter, she would have considered that more harm would be done by obtruding his religious neglect on her brother, with whose strictness she was well acquainted, than good by the personal attention paid to him. However, to her surprise and relief, Algernon declined the cutlets. But there was a joint on the side-board ; perhaps he had an eye to the solider dish. No, he had no such intent ; he had evidently dined, so far as the first course was concerned, and his credit was saved with his uncle, of which Mrs. Wyndham was just then chiefly, or, rather, exclusively thinking.

Algernon, however, had no such view. It is difficult to define the motive which actuated him, for it had no reference to any human eye fixed on him at that moment ; neither was it of the supernatural order. It rather belonged to a species of reform which he felt urged to make in order to recommend himself to his beloved and to her mother ; a reform which he felt was incumbent upon him if he would entertain a chance of success. The same feeling which made him instinctively desire to loosen his ties with men of Captain Baines's stamp, led him to return externally to a certain respect for his religious obligations. This was not all hypocrisy and sham on his part, nor did it proceed solely from the desire to rehabilitate his reputation ; for neither Madame d'Héricourt nor her daughter would ever hear if he had partaken of meat on that particular Friday. In short, he was so far sincere that he contemplated making a real change of some sort, but of what sort was not very clear in his mind ; for Algernon, be it said, was not much given to self-scrutiny. Still, the good and the beautiful

shone so sweetly in the object of his affections that, without reasoning on the subject, he was under their spell and attraction to a certain degree, and so he refused the proffered cutlets, and ignored the leg of lamb smoking on the side-table.

The dinner went off without any further annoyance. Mr. Wyndham talked to his brother-in-law of wines, of duties on the same, and other commercial subjects with which Sanders was well acquainted. When the wine business was exhausted, other general topics were broached, upon which the uncle, homely as he might be, was able to give an intelligent and sensible opinion. The conversation was not such as peculiarly interested Algernon, nor were the subjects discussed such as were to him very familiar, but he could generally contrive to say something on whatever subject might be started, and he took his fair share in the task of entertaining his uncle. Mrs. Wyndham had never got over the observation on her appearance, and had been further ruffled by the incident of the cutlets, but she constrained herself, and put in her word from time to time, as in duty and hospitality bound. Emma did *not* constrain herself; her mother had begged her not to be rude to their guest and near relative, and she was not rude; but she was silent and sulky, and unlike herself. Gertrude never made any further observation after the one quoted. She seldom gave herself much trouble to talk, if not inclined, but then she always looked amiable; and, if her heart was sad, her countenance was not cloudy; her youth also might be reckoned to exonerate her from taking an active part in conversation.

The gentlemen did not sit very long after the ladies had retired; then followed sipping of tea and coffee and a little desultory talk.

“With your good permission, I think I shall go to bed early; I have had a long day of it,” said the uncle. Ready

permission was of course accorded. "What's your nearest church?"

"Catholic?" asked his sister.

"Why, yes; I am not turned Protestant, Betty." Betty was the familiar name by which the child had been called in the old days under the paternal roof, but the revival of it touched no tender chord in the matron's heart—she did not like it.

"We go to Farm-street," she replied; "it is very near."

"So much the better; and the hours of mass?"

"On Sundays? but to-morrow is Saturday."

"Bless your heart! I know that; I mean the week-day hours."

"You are surely not thinking of going to-morrow, John; and just off your journey and tired?"

"But I *was* thinking."

"There are several masses on week-days," said Gertrude. "Tyrell always goes to the earliest, which is at seven; she is my authority."

"Then you don't go yourselves?"

"Not regularly," answered Mrs. Wyndham, in a hesitating voice. "You see the hours do not suit, and the breakfast, and all that; just at this time of year, too, we are generally out so late."

"But this blessed London season does not last all the year round?"

"No, it does not last all the year round," repeated she, mechanically, after her brother.

Emma, we have seen, was not in good humour, so was seized with a wish to be frank, because at that moment frankness would be unwelcome. "The fact is," she said, "we do not go to mass on week-days, except occasionally in Lent."

"I should like to go," said Gertrude, taking courage to make a faint protest.

"My dear," said her mother, "you know you are not strong enough. It is nonsense talking like that."

"And Emma?" asked the tiresome uncle; "I think, my girl, *you* look stout and strong enough."

"Well, I don't go except when Mama goes; that is all I can say."

"Gertrude is inclined to go and cannot," said Algernon, laughing; "and Emma could go, but is not inclined—that is about the state of the case; is it not?"

"Thank you, Algernon," replied his sister; "but I never commissioned you to report my inclinations. I can speak for myself. However, I certainly am never inclined to go out before breakfast; when I have to do so, it disagrees with me."

"I think, then, that it comes to this," observed Uncle John, poking the wick of his just-lighted fat candle: "there is a 'lion in the way' as respects you all."

"A what?" said Mrs. Wyndham.

"Don't you know the Scripture proverb about the slothful man and the lion? Well, I fear, there may be a lion in the way for *me* to-morrow; for I feel as if I should take a long snooze when once I get my head on the pillow. So good-night to you all. What's your breakfast hour?" he inquired, turning back, with his hand on the door.

"Suppose we say nine, or a little after, to-morrow, as we are so early to-night," said his sister.

"All right," replied her brother, as he closed the door.

"John Sanders is a very good fellow," observed Mr. Wyndham, as soon as the creaking of his shoes betokened the descent of his guest to the ground-floor; "but I suppose he is a bit of a bigot."

"He is very strict, I fancy," said Mrs. Wyndham. "I remarked that he was so when he was over here twelve or thirteen years ago. I have an idea that his wife led him that way. I never saw her, but have heard she was very good

—quite like a Sister of Charity ; and the daughter takes to the same line, it seems.”

“I don’t mind how good people are, so long as they don’t meddle with me,” said her husband, who had subsided into an arm-chair to discuss the dregs of his morning paper.

“I should not like to be meddled with either,” observed Algernon, “or preached to ; but I must say I like a woman none the less for being more religious than myself. Piety certainly becomes a woman ; when it is not stiff or censorious, I mean.”

“And perhaps,” said Emma, a little slyly, “some women become piety not a little, and recommend it as much as it recommends them.”

To this allusion Algernon did not vouchsafe a response. “Well, mother, I think I shall take myself off now,” he said ; “and perhaps I shall look you up in the course of to-morrow.”

The fond parent begged he would do so, and he departed.

“I think Anne d’Héricourt is making a convert of Algernon,” observed Emma ; “or, at any rate, he is in process of qualifying himself for the situation of son-in-law to Madame.”

“Do you mean,” asked her father, looking up from his paper, “that that fellow is thinking of marrying the tall, fair girl I saw the other day ?”

“He might do worse,” said Mrs. Wyndham. “She is a nice girl, the family is good, and there must be some money.”

“Yes, he might do worse, certainly,” replied her husband, “and I dare say will do worse ; but he has as much chance of marrying Mademoiselle d’Héricourt, I should think, as I have of being prime minister.”

Mrs. Wyndham did not pursue the subject.

"Is anything the matter with you, Emma?" asked her mother, as she received the customary "good-night" and kiss from her daughter.

"Nothing particular, Mama. I have got a headache."

"I hope you will sleep it off, my dear"; and she drew her affectionately towards her as she said these soothing words to her ungracious child. For Mrs. Wyndham knew well enough that Emma was simply out of humour.

"Have you asked any one to meet Sanders to-morrow?" inquired Mr. Wyndham, after the girls had retired.

"O, dear, no!" replied his wife, in rather an alarmed tone. "I have not thought of such a thing. It is not the least necessary. John does not expect it, I am sure, having come in this family sort of way, as he has; and for a fortnight, too! He does not expect company to meet him."

"You know best, my love," said the acquiescent husband. "I am quite satisfied; I was only afraid he might feel dull."

"If he should feel dull—after all, he asked himself," continued Mrs. Wyndham; "it is not as if we had invited him, and were bound to make the visit a gay one. Besides, I am sure I do not know whom I could ask to meet him; and then we have company next week, you know."

"All right, all right, my dear," said Mr. Wyndham, who soon got tired of an array of reasons; "I have no doubt you are quite right"; and so the matter ended.

"A fortnight more of this sort of thing," said poor Mrs. Wyndham to herself, as she mounted to her apartment; "and only one evening over! Gertrude cannot help me, and Emma will not, and Algernon, dear boy, will not be here to-morrow. Percy after a bit will, I fear, get tired, too. O, dear! O, dear!" And then Mrs. Wyndham reverted to the alarm about Captain Baines, and the other annoyances connected with the impending dinner and party.

Had it not been for Roper's presence, the poor lady, though little prone to be lachrymose, could have shed a few tears of sheer vexation while that functionary was helping her mistress to unrobe.

CHAPTER XX.

UNCLE JOHN AND HIS NIECES.

UNCLE JOHN was in the breakfast-room punctually at nine o'clock. For a few minutes he was its sole occupant. By-and-by Gertrude made her appearance. The early bloom of the day was on her face, a bloom so evanescent, in her case, under the influence of fatigue. She was dressed simply and in good taste, and looked charming. So her uncle thought, as he took her hand in one of his and caressed her chin with the other.

"So, my pretty, you are first in the field," he said.

"I make the tea, uncle," said Gertrude.

"Ah, the youngest makes the tea; so it was with us when I had two. Mary made the tea; but my darling is gone to God; so Teresa now makes it—there are only she and I now." Uncle John said all this with a smile on his face, but there was a moisture in his eye which gave token of what was passing in the father's heart.

A sympathetic tear rose to Gertrude's eye also. "How old is my cousin?" she asked.

"Teresa is eighteen; just a year older than you. She is a sweet girl, and a favourite with everybody; not with foolish Papa only."

"I should like to see her very much," said Gertrude.

"I wish you could, my dear. Well, suppose you come back with me to Palermo? I will take great care of you."

"O, uncle!"

"You would not like it?"

"I did not mean that. You are very good, and I think I *should* like it, but Mama and Papa——"

"They would not spare you, I suppose; that's it?"

"I am afraid they would not let me go; indeed, I am sure they would not."

"And then, I dare say, you would not like to leave all these gaieties? Don't be afraid to speak the truth. I like the truth."

"I don't know quite. I like balls when I am at them, but I sometimes wish I did not like them and had never been to one. A friend of mine, Anne d'Héricourt, has never been out in the world, and does not wish to go; and I think she is happier than I am."

"Happier than you are! Why here is quite a little sage at seventeen, who has found out the misery of the world!"

"Don't laugh at me, uncle."

"Bless your soul! child, I am not laughing at you; I love to hear you talk. And who is Anne d'Héricourt?"

Then Gertrude told the story of Emma's accident, and the kindness she had received.

"Those seem people of the good sort. I should like to know them. And why doesn't your friend 'go out,' as they call it?"

"I think her mother does not like the kind of thing; the daughters are brought up very strict. But I liked to be with them; they were very kind and pleasant, and I used to come home so comfortable."

"Don't you feel comfortable after your gay doings? I fancy you are not very strong, my girl."

"I am easily tired by being up late, and I get a bad cough in the winter ; but that is all."

"That is all ! that is quite enough. Now I think a winter at Palermo would be just the thing for the cough. And we would go a pilgrimage to Santa Rosalia, and she would cure you. My Teresa is very devout to the Santa, and commits all her little affairs to her."

"How nice !" said Gertrude, "O, I am sure I should like to go !"

The entrance of Mrs. Wyndham interrupted the *tête-à-tête*. "I did not know you were down, John. I fear I have kept you waiting for breakfast."

"I have been waiting in very good company, I can tell you. I have been making my niece's acquaintance ; we have got very intimate already, and have been telling each other all our little secrets—have we not Gertrude ?"

Mrs. Wyndham was somewhat taken by surprise at this communication, and did not know how to reply ; so she simpered instead.

"I am going to carry her back with me to Palermo ; it is all settled."

"I don't know what Papa would say to that plan," replied the mother. She said nothing about her own feelings on the subject ; it was not necessary, as she had her husband's objections to fall back upon ; but her whole soul revolted at the bare idea.

Emma now entered ; she had made her reflections during the night, and they had resulted in a determination to be in better humour and behave more pleasantly to her mother. To whom else could she look to stand by her ? and she might need her support before long. So the cloud was off her face now, and Mrs. Wyndham perceived the change at once, with much satisfaction. The clearance raised a corresponding weight off her own mind. Mrs. Wyndham dearly loved both her girls, but Emma was the

most necessary to her, and was apt to be disagreeable at times into the bargain ; both which circumstances gave her special power, and caused her to be humoured and petted more than her sweet-tempered sister.

By this time the tea had been made, and was giving forth that peculiar fragrance which indicates the proper moment for pouring it out. Emma presided over the coffee at the other end of the table.

“Where is Wyndham?” asked Sanders.

“He is generally late,” replied his sister ; “he very often drinks chocolate ; so he tells us not to wait.”

“Tea, uncle?” The uncle assented, and Gertrude poured out his cup and handed it to him.

“Have you sugared me?”

“Done what, uncle?” asked Gertrude.

“Sugared me, child—put in my sugar?”

Emma’s lip curled, and Mrs. Wyndham winced sympathetically with her eldest daughter.

“O, no ; of course I have not. I don’t know how much sugar you like,” replied Gertrude, simply.

“Lots ; so you will know next time.”

“It is best for all to help themselves,” said Mrs. Wyndham, fidgeting ; “the sugar and cream are by you, John.”

“It is scalding hot,” said John Sanders, after his first sip. “By your leave,” and he poured a portion into his saucer, which he raised to a level with his mouth to blow at it, holding it in both his hands, with the little fingers stuck out at right angles.

“O dear ! a fortnight of this sort of thing ! Fortunately there is no one to see him,” muttered his sister, inwardly.

“Now, what is the order of the day?” asked the unconscious guest, setting down the saucer.

“We have very little order here at all,” said Emma,

who thought it well on her mother's account to take some share of the burden of conversation.

"You will not mind having only ourselves to dinner, John, I hope," observed Mrs. Wyndham; "I thought you would prefer it, meeting as we do so seldom."

"Much," said her brother. "I have come to see *you*, not your gay friends."

"But we are to have a very gay party at the end of next week—a dinner and a little *soirée dansante*. I fear that will not be in your way; but the cards were out, so it could not be avoided, and you shall sleep in the attic that night, if you don't mind, and can go to bed when tired; you will not hear the noise much, I hope, up there."

"I am not going to be sent to bed in that way, Beatrice,—like a naughty boy, I can tell you. I shall stay and see the folk footing it. Such gay doings don't often come in my way. And whom have you to dinner?"

"A party of gastronomes," said Emma. "I am to partake with them, but Gertrude is turned out for the occasion, and will only get the good dishes when they emerge from the festive board."

"Upon my word, I shall be tempted to join her," said Uncle John, "being rather of Sancho Panza's opinion, and enjoying my bit behind a door better than in grand company. You and I, Gertrude, will munch behind the door."

"What a funny idea!" said Gertrude, laughing.

She was, however, the only one who laughed. Emma looked supercilious, and Mrs. Wyndham played with her knife and fork, and a bit of fried bacon on her plate. She hardly knew how to deal with this intimacy which had suddenly sprung up between the uncle and her youngest daughter. All was in extremes: Emma was too distant, Gertrude too familiar.

"Bless my soul, though!" exclaimed John Sanders, "I

must stir my stumps about my teeth ; it will never do to appear before all your fashionables, Beatrice, looking like a prize-fighter who has had the worst of it."

Here Emma fairly burst out into an honest laugh, remembering what she had herself said to Algernon the previous evening.

"That's the first time I have seen you laugh, my girl," said her uncle, "and it does me good. A girl is worth nothing who cannot laugh. Girls *ought* to laugh."

"I can tell you, John, Emma can not only laugh herself, but make us all laugh very often," said her mother.

"Well, we shall get better acquainted, I dare say," replied the good-humoured uncle. "I am used to seeing merry faces. My Teresa is as merry as a grig."

"Dear me ! you surprise me," said his sister.

"She took on, of course, a good deal about Mary's death, and missed her much ; but she is getting over that now."

"But I thought—I thought," said Mrs. Wyndham, "that she was quite of a serious turn."

"There's a time for everything, as Solomon said," replied Sanders ; "she is serious at the right times."

"But I thought she was inclined to a conventual life."

"She hopes she has got a vocation ; but it is quite a Protestant fiction, as you ought to know, my good sister, to think that convents are retreats for melancholy people. I wonder what the nuns themselves would say to that. They would soon turn a dreary postulant to the right about. Melancholy people don't do in convents ; the convents don't want them, and they want a stronger dram to keep up their spirits than they will get there. You must bring your own spirits with you ; they are not furnished in the convent bill of fare. Nuns like postulants with pluck."

"But, my dear John, you don't suppose that melancholy or pensive persons—for I did not mean melancholy

exactly when I spoke of your Teresa—you do not mean that such persons generally take to drink ?”

Here Uncle John burst into a sudden gust of such uncontrollable laughter, that he fairly sputtered his tea over his plate. “You have quite choked me, Beatrice,” he at last blundered out ; “I did not know you were so matter-of-fact. Good morning to your nightcap, Wyndham”—this was to his brother-in-law, who entered the room at that moment—“we have half done breakfast.”

“You must excuse me, Sanders ; I am a terrible fellow for punctuality, except where business is concerned.”

“There is nothing to excuse, so far as I am concerned ; you see I have been well provided for. You members of Parliament are privileged persons at home, having so much to do in public ; and, besides, I should be quite sorry if there was any etiquette about me.”

“You will make yourself at home, John—that’s right” ; and Mr. Wyndham dropped into his chair, and took up the paper.

“What does nephew Algernon do for and with himself ? He does not live here, does he ?” asked Sanders.

“O, that fellow, Algernon”—his father generally called him “that fellow,” with a peculiar tone by no means significant of satisfactory feelings evoked by the recollection of his son—“he lounges away a certain number of hours most days at the Foreign Office. I should think the Government would scarce miss his exertions, for which it pays a very moderate sum ; and I suspect he has not ambition enough to make his way to anything higher.”

Mrs. Wyndham scraped her throat. “Dear Algernon has good abilities, which in his present subaltern situation are, of course, quite wasted. And everything goes so by patronage, that it is disheartening to a young man of talents.”

“To return to the order of the day,” said Uncle John,

who appeared to take more interest in his nieces than in his nephew—"dine at half-past seven, and lunch ——?"

"We have luncheon at half-past one, or nearer two, perhaps," said his sister.

"Well, by-and-by I shall take a saunter. Will one or both of you girls go with me? You see I don't know my way about this great city, and shall get lost, perhaps, like the babes in the wood."

Mrs. Wyndham looked inquiringly at her daughters, or, rather, at her eldest daughter, for Emma was the difficult and doubtful one.

"Minny Vincent calls in her brougham for me, Mama, this morning. She is going to choose a pianoforte, and wants my opinion; and then I go back with her to Cadogan Place, to hear Julia and M. Dubois practise."

"In short," said Uncle John, "we may reckon Emma to be a pig with a soaped tail this morning; we shall not get hold of *her*."

"I shall like a walk very much," said Gertrude.

And so it was at once arranged that the uncle and his youngest niece were to be companions.

"Suppose we say eleven o'clock; but I wish first to go and visit your basement floor. I want to see your kitchen range—not to say, that excellent woman, your cook." This project was carried out. Uncle John, escorted by Gertrude, went down below after breakfast and visited kitchen, back kitchen, larder, cellar—every place, in short, even to the coal-hole, poking his nose into every corner, and asking questions about everything—John Sanders was evidently a great man for questions. Gertrude could satisfy very few of his inquiries, but Mrs. Tyrell supplied the deficiency. She was herself not exempted personally from the interrogatory, to which she replied concisely, with her usual mildness. The following dialogue took place in the drawing-room after the conclusion of the progress:—

"That cook of yours don't look like a cook."

"She has not the appearance of having much stamina," replied Mrs. Wyndham; "but she is strong, for all that, and gets through her work without fatigue."

"No, Mama, I am sure she is very much tired sometimes," said Gertrude; "but she never complains."

"I don't mean only that she is not stout and thick," resumed the uncle, "but she is like a lady in her manners."

Mrs. Wyndham simpered. "I cannot say I ever noticed that." Inwardly she was thinking that her brother John was a poor judge of such matters.

"She is a mousy thing, with no particular manners at all, I should say," observed Emma. "Rachel looks more like a lady of the two."

"What! that *pappagallo*, with the yellow chignon?"

"I don't know about a *pappagallo*. I did not mean that she is anything striking; only, of the two, she has the best claims on the score of air and manners."

"Well, every one has a right to his own opinion; and I say Mrs. Tyrell is a duchess, compared to her."

"They are both well enough in their way; and it does not much signify, I am sure," said Mrs. Wyndham, who took slight interest in her servants, save as regarded their efficiency.

"We had a talk about the soup," continued her brother; "and I asked her how she gave it that brown colour and relishy flavour."

"Cooks are generally a little mysterious about their art," said Mrs. Wyndham.

"Mrs. Tyrell was not a bit mysterious; she told me it was by frying the vegetables. 'That is what they do abroad,' says I. 'Where did you learn that dodge?' So she told me she learnt it in France."

"O, yes, I forgot, Tyrell was, I believe, in France at one

time, with the family from whom I engaged her. She wished to remain in England, so left them, as they were going abroad again. It had slipped my memory. She stews very well ; even your father allows that, Emma."

"I heard Anne d'Héricourt say," observed Gertrude, "that the fault of English cooks is that they stew too fast."

"By the bye, Anne is something of a dab at cooking herself—so odd !" interposed Emma.

"Oh, Emma, a dab !" exclaimed Gertrude.

"Well, a dab—I don't object to that word, my girl, at all ; it is very expressive, and came out naturally. Don't you mind your fastidious sister " ; and Uncle John facetiously bestowed a slap on Emma's back.

She liked neither the familiarity nor the being patronized in vulgarity by her uncle. "I am like Solomon and Teresa," she said ; "I understand the times and seasons for things, and suit my behaviour accordingly."

Whether or no Uncle John caught the insinuation conveyed under this remark, her mother at any rate did, and thought it well to obviate any too particular application by remarking that perhaps it was as well not to use a word, when they were alone, which was not producible in company, lest it might slip out unawares another time.

"It will not slip out unawares," replied Emma, dryly.

"Mademoiselle d'Héricourt," continued Mrs. Wyndham, "is really a very nice girl, though she is an adept at cookery. She is very well brought up, and by no means devoid of accomplishments ; and is very pretty besides. I feel a great interest in her from peculiar circumstances—because—on account—well, I need not mind telling you, John, just between ourselves—on account of my dear Algernon, who is much attached to her. Nothing could be more suitable in every way."

"And is it to be ?"

"Oh, things have not gone so far, John. There may be considerable difficulties in the way, I apprehend. Whether Madame d'Héricourt will consider Algernon's prospects satisfactory, I cannot say as yet. It would be out of his power, you see, to make any settlement."

"Perhaps the young lady has enough for both."

"Possibly; there certainly must be money, for there are but these two girls, and the French law secures their inheritance to them; but, you see, parents expect settlements; and then Percy, with all his electioneering expenses, could not afford, I fear, to give such an allowance to the young couple as might satisfy Madame d'Héricourt's expectations. She is a most excellent person, and a very devout Catholic too, but even your good people have their prudential views and considerations. I do not blame them, I am sure. I know what a mother's feelings are. I own, however, to being just at this moment very anxious on this subject. It would be everything for my dear boy to be settled."

"Humph!" said the uncle.

Mrs. Wyndham had her object in all that she had said, and in furtherance of this object had not scrupled to be untruthful. For she was perfectly well acquainted with what had passed between Madame d'Héricourt and her son; and she knew that to money no allusion had been made on that or any other occasion. She saved her conscience, however, by putting the matter, so far as words were concerned, hypothetically. And was it not very likely, she said to herself, that, if personally satisfied with Algernon, this further difficulty might and would occur?

"And pray, may I ask," said Sanders, after a slight pause, "how the young lady is disposed?"

"Oh, as to that," replied his sister, "I have never any fear respecting our Algernon. He is such a general favourite, so pleasant, so amiable, so handsome, so everything that could recommend him in a girl's eyes, that I

never expected that difficulties could arise in that quarter." Mrs. Wyndham did not venture to say that he had been positively accepted, because this admission would have forced her to abandon hypothesis and state realities.

"Nephew Algernon is a good-looking and agreeable young man," replied her brother, "and, I dare say, knows how to make his way with the ladies." And there the conversation ended.

"I wish you joy of your proposed walk this morning," said Emma to her sister, as they were both putting on their bonnets.

"I shall not dislike my walk at all," replied Gertrude ; "Uncle John is really very kind and good-natured."

"Kind and good-natured, if you will, but so is our butler, Bowles, for anything I know to the contrary, besides looking quite as much or more of a gentleman than this imported uncle of ours ; yet I should hardly enjoy walking arm-in-arm with him down St. James's Street, and by all the club windows."

"But then he is the butler ; neither, of course, should I like to do anything so strange."

"How stupid you are, Gertrude ! How can you think I meant that the two cases were just alike ? But really there is no use explaining things to you, if you cannot see them yourself. All I meant was that a person being very good-natured was not reason enough to feel no mortification at being seen tacked to him. Suppose you were to meet one of your partners or friends whom I could mention ? Do you mean that you would be very proud of your companion ; particularly if they should find out he was your uncle ? He does look so vulgar ; I suppose you see that ; and so odd and comical besides. No one could believe he was a gentleman, and no one can help observing him, with his queer looks and ways."

"I don't know why I should care," replied Gertrude ;

"one is not responsible for one's uncle's appearance ; and what do friends care ? As for partners, I don't suppose I should have one less invitation to dance in consequence."

"You are a goose, Gertrude," said her sister ;—she had very nearly said "a fool." "But there is the brougham" ; and Emma ran downstairs. She looked hurriedly into the drawing-room. There was only John Sanders there, standing before the central table, and examining the books which lay upon it, while waiting for his companion. "Oh, Mama is not here ?" she said, with that look of perfect absorption in her own concerns which conveys so disobliging an impression.

"Mama is not here ; do you want her ?"

"No, I was only just going to say she must not reckon on my being back for luncheon."

She bustled off, without awaiting any reply. John Sanders delivered himself of it to the four walls. "We shall manage to get on without you," he said.

The uncle had now made acquaintance with his two nieces ; and it need scarcely be said that he liked the youngest the best.



CHAPTER XXI.

A WALK AND A TALK.

GERTRUDE soon joined her uncle in the drawing-room, equipped for walking. Although she had stoutly withstood her sister, nevertheless Emma's remarks had not altogether failed of making some impression. Not that she had in any way shared her sentiments as to the disgrace in the eyes of the world of possessing an unpolished uncle : on

this point she was tolerably callous. Emma was very proud, and keenly felt any mortification to her ruling passion ; but Gertrude was not at all proud, and hence far less sensitive on points of this nature, but then she was sensitive in another way : she was timid, and disliked drawing attention by what was strange or unusual. That her uncle should be homely and unpolished, nay, even vulgar, did not distress her much, but Emma had added that he was “so odd and comical,” and that his queer looks could not fail to attract everybody’s notice. This shot struck home. Certainly Uncle John *was* odd and comical-looking, and she was not quite sure now that she should much enjoy her walk with a character of that sort. They would be stared at, she feared ; and Gertrude shrank from being stared at.

They had not long been in the streets before she had reason for thinking that her apprehensions had been by no means ungrounded. John Sanders walked with his nose in the air, looking from right to left, as if he were taking a mere country stroll ; and now and then he stood still, and, horrible to tell, pointed at something which had excited his curiosity and suggested one of his numerous questions. Gertrude was leaning on him, and endeavoured gently to get him on, but it was no use. Her uncle also preferred the crowded and gay streets to the quiet ones. “Don’t take me down between those dingy rows of houses,” he said ; “you are a bad pioneer, Gertrude. I like looking in at the shop windows.” And he did look in at a great many of the shop windows, and stood and laughed, and made his observations as loud as if no one were within hearing. The niece did *not* enjoy her walk, but she resigned herself.

“Well, this is a Vanity Fair, certainly !” exclaimed Uncle John, after a prolonged observation of the gay and richly-stocked shop-front of one of those monster establishments which abound now in the metropolis. “How would you

like to have a picking and choosing out of that window for nothing, my girl?"

"Very much."

"Very much? Then I will set you a nice penance. Walk down one of these big streets, take a look at all the grand things displayed, and say, 'I should like this shawl, or that bonnet, or that silk dress,' and reckon that they are each offered you, as I said; then refuse them, and deny yourself each smart thing in succession. There is a cheap way of making merit."

"I do not think I should succeed in making any."

"Why?"

"Because if I might have the things I admire for nothing, I should not refuse them, I know. Yet, it is true, I do sometimes feel a scruple about our fine dresses when we are going out to a ball."

"Why do you feel a scruple?"

"I can hardly explain. I believe it is because being dressed out in that way is so unlike the saints."

"I suppose you don't think yourself very like a saint in anything else; do you?"

"No, indeed, uncle."

"There you are quite right, my pretty one. You are only a good little girl who means well, but a long way off being a saint, take my word for it. However, if the exercise I recommended is beyond you, I will set you something easier. Mortify yourself by not giving a glance at these fine things, and walk with your nose straight before you."

"Really, uncle," said Gertrude, laughing, "your preaching and practice do not agree well together. Here have you been examining all these vanities for the last half-hour."

"They do not tempt me, my dear, you see; and how do you know that I am not inwardly execrating them all, and making acts of detestation of the world, instead of

nourishing covetous desires? Perhaps I have got as far as that; what do you think?"

"I dare say you have; I wish I had. But then it is easier for you, uncle, to despise bonnets and ribbons and silk gowns, for you do not want them."

"That is very true, Gertrude; now, I had not thought of that," replied Uncle John, with mock gravity; "that pulls me down from my stilts. It was a shrewd hit of yours, I guess. Stop, I must go in here," said the good-humoured uncle, pausing at the door of a large watchmaker and jeweller's shop; "my repeater wants setting to rights." They went in, and Sanders dragged out from his waistcoat pocket a gigantic silver watch, in a case like a warming-pan. "Now, Gertrude," he said, "I have a great deal to say; so do you divert yourself with looking about you. The penance need not begin to-day."

Gertrude did as she was bid, and amused herself with examining the jewellery under the glass cases, now and then giving a glance at her comical uncle, to see if he had finished. The shop was large, and after going down one side she came back leisurely by the opposite one; and Uncle John had not done yet.

He heard her step, and, looking round hastily, said, "Take another turn, my dear." She took another turn, and, when this was concluded, found her companion ready for a fresh start. "Come," he said, as they sallied forth, "I told Mama that I would not let you be tired; so we must go and sit down somewhere or other, for I am not for going back yet; I mean to have a talk as well as a walk."

"St. James's Park is not far off."

"Well, let us proceed to St. James's Park."

"But, uncle," said Gertrude, pleadingly, "please be careful at the crossings, when they are so crowded."

"Nonsense, child! you ought to be more used to them than I am. I am afraid you are a bit of a coward."

"It frightens me, threading my way in that fashion; I like to wait till the street is pretty clear."

"You may wait ever so long for that. Trust to me. I take a general's eye of the field first, and so plan my tactics—before this cab, behind that omnibus, and so on, and then forward without flinching. You tried to draw me back last time, the most dangerous thing in the world. Irresolution is the worst sort of cowardice; when you have made up your mind, don't look back, but carry through. That is the proper way in everything."

"But I had not made up my mind at all. I should not have crossed if you had not drawn me on, uncle."

"I told you to trust to me. That's a bit of self-will and private judgment of yours. You see a walk in the streets may be turned into an examen of conscience, as well as a penance."

Gertrude laughed. "You are a terrible director, uncle," she said.

When they reached the Park, the conversation diverged to the changes made there since last he had visited London. Then John Sanders hummed a tune, as if he were walking in the fields, but there were only nursery-maids and children and a few solitary pedestrians about, so Gertrude minded less what her companion might do. They found an empty bench in the Birdcage Walk at last, and there they seated themselves.

"Now I have lots of questions to ask," he began,—Gertrude thought he had done nothing but ask questions,—"I want to know everything about you."

"O, dear! uncle, how can I answer so general a question? And then there is nothing to tell."

"Isn't there? We shall see. Come, I will be more particular. How do you spend every day? What is your plan?"

"Plan? I have not got any plan."

"That is the worst plan of all, to live on no plan."

"But if I made a plan of the day, it would be sure to be interrupted."

"No matter ; well, tell me at least how the day passes usually."

"When we have not been out the night before, we usually breakfast at the hour we did to-day. In the course of the morning Mama takes a walk, generally, with one or both of us."

"To pay visits ?"

"No, that is too early ; we pay them in the carriage in the afternoon. Mama calls that walk a 'constitutional,' and we sometimes shop a little. We have luncheon at half-past one."

"But what do you do for the rest of the morning ?"

"O, different things. Emma practises a good deal, but I have not her talent for music ; however, I accompany her sometimes when she is singing, and we play duets, too, occasionally."

"Do you read ?"

"O, yes."

"What do you read ?"

"Some of the library books. We subscribe to Mudie, and also to Rolandi ; so have foreign works as well."

"And what are your subjects—your favourite subjects, I mean ? Do you like history, or travels, or biography ?"

"I do not think I care much for biography or travels."

"Or history ?"

"We seldom have a book of history. Emma and Mama make out the lists, and I read what I find. There are so many new novels now that they nearly make up our number."

"So you chiefly read novels ?"

"I read a good many. I like an interesting novel."

"Humph !" said the uncle.

"I do not mean that I read nothing but novels," added Gertrude, after a pause; "for, of course, I have my good books, which I read up-stairs."

"Your books of devotion?"

"Yes; I like them; and I wish I had more of them. I mean I wish I had more books on religious subjects."

"Why cannot you have more?"

"Mama seldom buys books." She might have added that, had Mama bought any, they would probably not have been of that description, but she did not.

"One cannot get on without spiritual reading," replied Uncle John. "I suppose in this Protestant city there is no Catholic circulating library; but there must be some lending libraries, I suppose?"

"Tyrell says that the Jesuits have a very good one quite close. I mentioned it to Mama once, but she said that she already subscribed to two libraries, and could not afford more."

"So that was no go. Then the reading comes to this: novels, and then good books; good books, and then back to novels, turn about."

Gertrude was silent.

"You like balls and parties?"

"Not parties at all, but balls very much; for I am very fond of dancing."

"Of the exercise?"

"Yes, of the exercise."

"Did it ever occur to you to dance about the room?"

"O, but that would be so dull!"

"Emma might play on the piano."

"O, Uncle John! How can you think that would be the same thing?"

"No, I don't think it would. There are the lights and the dress—which there is a scruple about: all the same, it's very nice; and then there are the partners. There's some

excitement in all that, and none in dancing about the drawing-room. It's the excitement you like, and not the exercise, my dear."

"You are hard upon me, uncle."

I think he was, for dancing is naturally a social act, and owes its zest to being shared with others. But Uncle John said he was not hard, and only wished to get to the bottom of things.

"I am not blaming you, child, for liking going to balls," he added.

"Yet I blame myself often," replied Gertrude, rather sadly; "and that is what made me feel your remark. What do you think about these balls, Uncle John? Am I wrong in going?"

"I never said you were wrong. Do your parents wish you to go?"

"Yes, they do; at least Mama does; but I cannot say that I go out of obedience, exactly. I could wish that I did not like them so much myself."

"You keep a large stock of velleities, my little woman. You know what a velleity is, don't you?"

"A half-wish; is it not?"

"Yes, it is half a wish; it is wishing the end without the means. You want to be very good indeed, like what you read about holy people; is not that true?" Gertrude nodded assent. "But you would not relish their receipts for becoming holy, I fancy. We had better, perhaps, aim a trifle lower, just at present; and then we may possibly accomplish something. There's nothing like being *real*, say I."

"But what do you think, uncle, of all this ball-going and gaiety—the thing itself, I mean?"

"What do I think of a London season, as they call it? Well, I suppose it can hardly be said to help a young woman on her way to Heaven. I don't know much about those

sorts of things, and am not fond of talking of what I know very little about ; but any one can see that much, I think, without consulting a doctor of divinity. Such a big dose of gaiety and amusement must be waste of time ; and waste of time is apt to lead to worse ; isn't it ?" There was a pause, and then Sanders hummed a tune again. After which, as if he had been conning the matter over in his mind, he added, " Had not you better ask your confessor's opinion about these sorts of things ? That is, if you want to know it, and are minded to take his advice. There is no use asking otherwise. There is no use taking our scruples of conscience there, if we only do it to get ourselves made comfortable, Missy."

Gertrude had not yet seen her uncle look so grave ; and began to view him in quite a different light. He had laid his finger on a sore point, he seemed to have divined her weakness of character, and she was seized with a sudden respect for him.

After another short silence Sanders resumed the conversation in his usual cheery, good-natured tone. " Come, little body, I will give you a bit of advice, if you like to have it, which will be more to the purpose just now."

" I should like some advice very much. What is it ?"

" That you would try and educate yourself."

" Educate myself ? Mama says our education is finished, and I thought education ended at seventeen. Our governess went, indeed, when Emma was sixteen ; and then we had masters afterwards, till we each of us came out. Emma has a singing-master still."

" I don't mean that sort of thing at all. I don't mean teaching accomplishments, and so forth. I mean giving the mind a little solid food. You are full of scruples about going to balls, which you have hardly your own free choice about, while you fill up the day with trashy reading, quite as bad for you, if not very much worse. Why don't you

try and get a taste for something better? I hate those silly novels with all my heart. You tell me your mother and Emma choose the books. Do you mean that, if you asked them, they would not spare you one instructive book out of the number? Come, tell the truth, child; did you ever ask them?"

"No, I cannot say I ever did."

"Did you ever wish it?"

"Well—no; I could not say it occurred to me to wish it."

"That is the mischief. Now, pitch away those story-books of yours if you want to get out of namby-pamby unreality. What's the use dreaming of yourself as a heroine of romance the best part of the day, and wishing you were a saint for the remainder?"

"I am afraid you think me very bad, uncle."

"No, I don't think you bad at all; I fancy something could be made of you, or I should not say all this to you. I don't think I could make anything of Emma. She is a queer one."

"Indeed you have not seen Emma to advantage, uncle. She had a headache yesterday, and I own she has an oddish temper sometimes, but she has twice as much in her as I have. She has a great deal of spirit and courage, too, which, you see, I want; and, if she intended anything, would carry it through with a will, I can tell you. Much more might be made of her than of me, I assure you."

Gertrude spoke with animation, for she really loved and admired her sister, in spite of all her faults and frequent unkind speeches; and Emma could always, with a passing caress or one kind word, heal the wound she had inflicted on the gentle and forgiving Gertrude.

"I dare say what you say is very true," replied Uncle John. "Emma has a stronger will than you have; but, you see, it is not a good will—not at present, unless I am much mistaken. If her head was the right way, she would out-

strip you very likely. And now, I suppose we must be toddling home, or Mama will think we are lost. Besides, I have a short visit to pay on the way back. I am afraid you will not wish for another walk with me in a hurry, but will be saying, 'What a disagreeable old uncle I have got.'"

"O, no, no!" replied Gertrude, warmly.

"But I will promise you, my dear," he continued, "that if you will come with me to Palermo you shall have no more lectures. Perhaps you won't have quite so many balls; not enough to give you scruples, at any rate; but we shall be very jolly, and Teresa will be so glad to have you to read, and work, and walk with. She is a famous girl for her needle as well as her books, and has just finished such a splendid altar-cloth; I wish you could see it."

"So do I. I should so much enjoy that sort of thing, and reading and working something good and useful," replied Gertrude, "if I had any one to do it with and take an interest in it with me; I should, indeed, uncle. I would put away my novels in exchange very willingly. How I should like to go! But Mama will never agree."

Uncle John pressed affectionately the little hand which had been placed on his arm as they rose to turn homeward. Gertrude meant what she said, and, to do her justice, although weak, she had not the worst part of weakness, for she desired to be fortified against her infirmity. Hence good advice, or the having her faults pointed out to her, was far from offending her, and she clung to any one whose judgment she had reason to respect, even though that person might speak unpalatable truths. She was by nature extremely docile, and all her instincts and leanings were good. Had she been Madame d'Héricourt's and not Mrs. Wyndham's daughter, she would have followed like a lamb wherever she had been led. Already she had begun to see her uncle in quite a new light, and regard him as a providential

friend. What though he were unpolished, what even though he were odd and comical in his ways, she no longer gave a thought to what had considerably annoyed her but an hour before, and the return walk was one of undisturbed serenity.

"Where is Farm-street?" asked the uncle, as they were drawing near home; "I have not been inside a church door this blessed morning."

"This way; we are very near."

"Is the church open?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Don't you know? Does not your mother ever take you to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament?"

"We go to Benediction sometimes on the great festivals."

"That is all?"

"Nearly all."

"Humph!" ejaculated Sanders.

"Up here, uncle; this is the turn."

"What! is the church up these mews? It reminds one of the Stable and Manger—poor England!"

If it had been a few years later, he might have had still more cause to say "Poor Italy!" but the days of spoliation had not then begun.

"It is a very nice church when you are in it," said Gertrude. "Here it is." They entered, and Sanders went to kneel before the altar. Gertrude knelt a little way off. Her mind was almost too much occupied to pray, but she felt singularly impressed, as if she had never before been within those sacred walls. Accustomed only to frequent the church when it was filled with numerous other worshippers, the silence, the stillness, and almost solitariness, of the place at that hour produced on her mind a realization of nearness to Him who made His abode therein through all the hours of the day and night which was new to her. She fixed her eyes on the lamp of the sanctuary,

and thought for how many hours it offered its solitary homage ; then she cast a furtive glance at her uncle. He was kneeling with his hands clasped, his honest face raised a little, and beaming with an expression of joy and affectionate devotion, while his lips moved in prayer ; she thought, too, that she saw tears glistening in his eyes, which were fixed on the Tabernacle. Gertrude felt to love him dearly. By-and-by he pulled out a rosary, which for size was a fitting companion to the watch. He rose, and sidling towards his niece, whispered, "I am going to our Lady's Altar and will say a decade for your intention, Gertrude." This done, he went round the church, examining every object ; and then they returned to Berkeley Square, and the walk and talk were ended.



CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

WHILE the uncle and younger niece had been occupied in the manner described in the last chapter, the elder had been talking him over with her mother. Emma had returned sooner than expected, for on arriving at her friend's house in Cadogan Place she found that M. Dubois had sent word that he was prevented from keeping his appointment for that morning ; accordingly Miss Vincent's brougham had brought her home. Mr. Wyndham had gone to his club, and the hour for visitors had not yet arrived ; so that the mother and daughter had a long undisturbed *tête-à-tête*.

"Certainly, my brother John is an odd fish," observed Mrs. Wyndham.

"Yes, he is very odd, indeed," replied Emma. "One never knows what he is going to say next; and he is so unmannered. All vulgar people are not rude, at any rate; but he contrives to be everything that is disagreeable at once."

"His oddity perhaps makes his want of polish signify less," said Mrs. Wyndham; "it may pass for eccentricity with some people."

"I am sure I quite dread anybody seeing him," resumed Emma, who was Job's comforter always as regarded Uncle John; "my only hope is that he may retire more into his shell in company."

"I do not know that he will; nothing puts John down. He was always like that—afraid of nobody—and would blurt out the truth, and speak his mind upon every occasion."

"It is all very well to speak the truth," said Emma, "when you are asked; but I hate your systematic truth-tellers, who are proud of themselves for being disagreeable and discourteous, as if it were a virtue."

"It is natural to John to be like that; nothing will ever mend him. One thing strikes me, Emma; the h's are not so bad as I expected. He pronounces them all,—rather faintly, it is true, but that is better than leaving an occasional one quite out."

"You think it may pass for an idiosyncrasy, Mama? possibly it may."

"A what? my dear Emma; you do use such strange words sometimes."

"A peculiarity of his own, I mean," replied the daughter, condescending this time to explain.

"Just so."

"It is all bad enough at best," continued Emma. "We must drive out every day at the visiting hour, Mammy, so as to avoid people seeing him, and—hearing him, which is worse still."

"I have been proposing to your father to make an excursion to Richmond this week," said Mrs. Wyndham ; "that will dispose of one day at least ; it will get your uncle out of the way of people, and amuse him too. Your father thinks he can be spared on Tuesday, for there is nothing particular before the House that night ; and I want to get Algernon to accompany us. You see I am anxious that his uncle should be better acquainted with him."

"I doubt whether knowing him better will increase his liking for Algernon."

"How so, Emma ? Algernon is so liked by all who know him ; he cannot help liking him."

Emma shook her head doubtfully. "I do not think he is one of uncle John's sort. But, Mama, what is the use of cramming them down each other's throats ? This uncle has got a child of his own ; and, of course, he will leave all his property to her."

"If poor Teresa recovers her health and lives," replied Mrs. Wyndham, "she will in all probability be a nun. My brother will give a dowry, no doubt, with her, but not leave his whole property, which I believe is considerable, to the convent, you may be sure. He has a strong feeling about his relations ; and I have a great notion that he has come to look us all up with a view to eventualities."

"He has other nephews besides Algernon ; has he not ?"

"I am not quite sure whether he has any on the Sanders side. One of my sisters emigrated to Australia ; she has children, both boys and girls, I fancy, but your uncle John is not likely to have an eye to one of them. I have a brother who is settled in Glasgow, I believe, where he married somebody or other."

"Some Glasgow merchant's daughter, I suppose ?"

"Probably ; there may be a family. However, I have

not heard John mention them yet, but he has come to *us* ; so, at any rate, we have the first opportunity, supposing he means to visit the north ; and certainly we are the most credit to him ; and why, Emma, should you think it so utterly impossible that he should be prepossessed in Algernon's favour ? I am sure the dear boy made himself very agreeable yesterday evening."

"Yes, but Uncle John sees he is not his sort. Algernon is too much a man of the world for him, too polished. He has a sort of inkling of this, I can see he has, and does not fancy him in consequence. It is like the fox who had lost his tail ; he does not like foxes that have kept them ; he considers it the thing not to have a tail, because he has not got one himself. He could not be polite and polished if he tried ; so he prefers making a merit of being just the contrary. No, he will never take to Algernon ; indeed I do not think he takes to any of us, except Gertrude."

"Yes, he takes a great deal of notice of her," rejoined her mother quickly ; "and is it not strange ? I would not have believed it, but Gertrude seems so much pleased with his notice."

"Not at all strange, Mama ; that is just like Gertrude. She is always so pleased with being made much of by some humdrum person or other. Gertrude is not at all conceited. I wish she was more so, for then she would keep herself up a little, but if she takes it into her head that any one is good, no matter who it is, she is delighted with the notice. It is the same with respect to Tyrell. Really you would suppose that Gertrude had quite received a favour when the cook has bestowed a few words upon her. It is all because she knows that Tyrell is very pious."

"But I do not like that," said Mrs. Wyndham gravely,—
"I mean that letting herself down and talking familiarly to the servants. No good can come of the practice ; it makes them forget themselves. I wish to be kind, but every one

in their proper place, say I. I am glad you told me, Emma. I must see to this."

"I do not think Gertrude will get any harm from Tyrell," said Emma. She has no notions evidently beyond her kitchen and the church, and only cants a bit to her, I believe."

"And I do not like that *at all*."

"Please do not quote me, Mama. Gertrude would think I had served her a trick."

"I shall say nothing to implicate you, Emma. Indeed, I shall say nothing to Gertrude at all; only I shall not, for the future, let her order dinner. I will do that myself, as I used, and this will prevent the meetings. Now I think of it, I always give the servants some yearly amusement, so I may as well send them to the play the day we spend at Richmond. Roper and Bowles have had their turn, and would stay at home; James and the coachman will be with us, and the remainder could go."

"Will you send Tyrell? I have an idea that she would not care to go to the play."

"Whether or no, she will be wanted to go with the others. I should not like to send those two girls by themselves to a place of that sort without a man or woman of a certain age to look after them. I shall not ask Tyrell whether the play amuses her or not—that is nothing to me; and I shall have done the proper thing by letting her have her turn."

"And now, Mama, I have something to tell you; only think of my forgetting it till this minute. Minny's brother, William, is at home, so, of course, I asked him for Saturday. He sings bravura songs extremely well, and requires no pressing. In fact, I think he likes to show off, so it struck me that some singing before the dancing begins would be an agreeable variety. Julia Vincent has a good mezzo-soprano voice, and is accustomed to her sister's accompaniment, which makes so much difference, and gives confidence.

Minny will sing too. My contralto will come in very well ; and though I do not like figuring by myself before so many people, I do not mind in a duet or trio."

"That will be charming, my dear."

"But that is not all. Minny asked me if she might bring a cousin of hers, a Mr. Devereux, to which I graciously acceded ; and then it turned out that he is a great hand at the violoncello ; so, perhaps, he can be prevailed on to swell our band. Minny thought he would not object, and if not, she will let me know, and I will go another day to Cadogan Place and arrange the music."

"And I have something, too, to tell you, my love," replied her mother ; "only it is not *quite* settled. Your father has all but consented to our taking up the back drawing-room carpet. The back drawing-room is very nearly as big as the front, a little narrower, but quite as long, so it would answer the purpose well enough, and we could get the things moved in the morning while your father is out, so as not to worry him. Indeed, there will be very few pieces of furniture to move. Some of the chairs and one sofa will be wanted in here, and some on the first landing-place ; the remainder can easily be stowed away upstairs."

"Bravo !" exclaimed Emma ; "I am so glad. The back room is rather narrow for waltzing, to be sure ; but as we cannot have the front room, this is delicious" ; and Emma ran on with various suggestions and arrangements.

Mrs. Wyndham, however, seemed now to have been seized with a fit of absence, for she made no response. In fact, she was pondering in her own mind how she could best introduce a caution on the delicate subject of Captain Baines's attentions, and was sorely puzzled. If the truth must be owned, Mrs. Wyndham was somewhat afraid of her daughter, as may already have appeared. No, she felt she could not do it. And, besides, how frame an excuse for alluding to the

subject without betraying Algernon? No, she certainly could not do it. At this moment a rap at the door startled her out of her reverie. "That must be my brother and Gertrude," she said. "How long they have been out. ! Dear me ! it is past one o'clock ; she will be quite fagged."

"And will never say so if she is," added Emma, "but will allow herself to be dragged about till she is ready to drop. But I do not think it is them, Mama."

The door was thrown open, and the footman announced "Captain Baines." Emma coloured, and Mrs. Wyndham almost started, but the gentleman stepped forward with much ease, and, after shaking hands with Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter—adding, we may be sure, in the latter case, a significant pressure—he proceeded to apologize for calling at so early an hour. It must be observed that this visit of civility was an acknowledgment of the party. Captain Baines considered himself intimate enough to seek admittance, instead of merely leaving his card the following day. Mrs. Wyndham was in a state of mind rare indeed with her ; she felt embarrassed, and muttered something in return, of which the purport was not quite clear. Captain Baines understood it as a disclaimer of any annoyance at an early call, and forthwith took a seat on a chair opposite to her.

"You see, Mrs. Wyndham," he began, "if you are desirous to catch a sight of the lady on whom you call, there is nothing like calling early in the day ; and I must plead guilty to having very much wished for an opportunity to say what a charming party yours was the other night. There has been none this season at which people have enjoyed themselves so much ; every one is saying so, and how completely you smashed Mrs. Maitland and Mrs. Trelawney."

At this announcement Mrs. Wyndham smiled and sim-

pered a little. It seemed a very pleasant and soothing idea—the having *smashed* those two ladies.

“I meant to have called before this,” resumed her visitor, “and brought my answer in person to your kind invitation to dinner for Saturday, but Selden carried me off to Gravesend; so I had to write my reply, which I trust you received.”

Mrs. Wyndham bowed assent. “Lord Selden, I suppose?” she said.

“The same you yachted with last year?” asked Emma. That young lady had noted her mother’s unusual manner, but attributed it to the fear of the inopportune return of Uncle John, an apprehension which she shared, and which considerably diminished the pleasure she felt at her lover’s visit.

“The same; and he has been pressing me to go to Norway with him this summer.”

“And do you mean to go?” inquired Mrs. Wyndham.

“I hardly know as yet,” replied the Captain, playing with his gold-headed cane; “that depends upon other circumstances.”

“It would be a pity to lose so pleasant an excursion,” rejoined Mrs. Wyndham.

“Yes,” replied Baines, “it would—unless it were sacrificed for something more agreeable.”

“Of course.”

The conversation certainly languished. Emma thought well to start a fresh topic. — Did Captain Baines know Sir Philip Eagle?

“Every one knows Eagle by sight and reputation,” he replied; “but I have as yet never had the honour of an introduction.”

“If your taste should happen to agree with my brother’s,” said Emma, “you will think him the most disagreeable man in London. Algernon quite loathes him.”

"You must not set Captain Baines against our dinner party," interposed her mother. "You will frighten him away." This was an effort at graciousness.

"Hardly, I think," replied Baines, smiling. "Besides, Eagle is rather a curiosity. I should like to see him eating. I understand he is the greatest *gourmand* in England."

"Papa would correct you if he was here, and say that Sir Philip was only a *gourmet*."

"I believe he is both when he likes his dish ; so I have heard Selden remark, who knows him pretty well." Another slight pause, and then the Captain inquired politely after Miss Gertrude.

"She is out walking," replied Mrs. Wyndham ; "and I almost expected her back before this, as it is getting so near luncheon-time."

The wily lady thought that the mention of that repast might suggest an early departure to her visitor. Whether or not it might by-and-by have done so, it is not easy to say ; Captain Baines did not take the hint at once, possibly from good taste, in order that he might not appear to have understood it as such, and thus give annoyance.

"There they are !" said Emma, looking at her mother, as Uncle John's unmistakable voice upon the staircase gave token of the arrival of the pedestrians. Probably the footman had been taking some fresh air, and staring about him at the hall door, for no knock had announced their coming.

The door now opened, and in burst John Sanders, who, before he observed the presence of a stranger, called out, "Well ! I suppose Mama is in a proper fuss by this time. We quite expected to have the town crier after us." When he had got so far, he perceived that there was another person present. Captain Baines had risen from his chair ; Mrs. Wyndham felt that she could not avoid some slight introduction, for the three were by this time confronting each other.

"Captain Baines—my brother, Mr. Sanders," she muttered; but no sooner had she gone through this ceremony than her surprise was excited by the strange behaviour of the latter. He made no response, no bow, but stood with open eyes staring fixedly at Captain Baines. Mrs. Wyndham felt thoroughly ashamed, and, this time at least, she appeared to have good cause. She scarcely ventured to give a passing glance at the Captain, who had faintly acknowledged the introduction by a slight inclination of the head, his countenance immediately assuming a disconcerted air, which was warranted, it might seem, by the rudeness to which he was subjected. There was short time, however, for reflection, for, as if desirous to remove himself as soon as possible from the stony gaze riveted upon him, the Captain made a hasty bow to Mrs. Wyndham, and forthwith departed, without even waiting to wish Emma good-bye, who was standing a little on one side speaking to her sister, and thus had not noticed what had taken place. She looked round with some surprise when she heard the door close, glanced at her mother's face, which expressed worry and mystification, and then, nothing remaining in the room to interest her, ran up-stairs with her sister to tell her the fresh arrangements about the party, while the latter was taking off her walking things.

Mrs. Wyndham and her brother were now alone. John Sanders had not moved a step, nor was he the first to break the short silence which ensued. At last his sister burst forth in reproaches.

"How could you behave in that way, John, and bring me to shame? So strange, so rude, to take no notice whatsoever when a gentleman is introduced to you!"

"I know the gentleman already," replied Sanders laconically.

"Then why did you not show that you recognized him?"

"How long have you been acquainted with that fellow?" said her brother, after a slight pause, without noticing her question; "and who made you acquainted with him?"

"We have known Captain Baines, if you mean him, about three months. Algernon introduced him to us, but every one knows him; he moves in the best circles. You have surely fallen into some mistake; and, as he dines here on Saturday, I trust you will make a fitting apology for your rudeness."

"I made no mistake, Beatrice, and am not going to make any apology. But he will *not* dine here; that you may be sure of. He will not venture to face *me*."

"Pray explain what you mean, John. Do you know anything to this gentleman's disadvantage?"

"Beatrice," said her brother emphatically, advancing a step and laying his forefinger on the table, "that man is a scoundrel. He knows he is, and he knows that I know it; so, rely upon it, he will not set his foot here again."

"I believe he is a gay man of the world, certainly," replied his sister; "in that respect his character, like that of many others, might not stand scrutiny; but it is not the custom, as you must be aware, to put gentlemen beyond the pale of society simply on that account."

"I know that as well as you do, sister Beatrice; and I know also that this same Captain Bold would very ill stand the scrutiny you allude to; nor would much scrutiny be needed, for there are certain offences, even of the tolerated order, which arrive at being so notorious as to make good mothers and brothers rather shy of introducing the perpetrators into the bosom of their families."

"Do not blame my dear boy," rejoined the tender mother quickly; "it was but the other day that he cautioned me against too close an intimacy with Captain Baines, on account of his sisters; and regretted, as I did myself, my

having asked him to dinner. To a mere general acquaintance, he considered, there could be no objection."

"So he considered; but, however tolerant nephew Algernon may be, he would hardly think so did he know all I do."

"You make me truly miserable," said his sister; "and I have also, I am sorry to say, asked another individual, a friend of Captain Baines, about whom my Algernon speaks more doubtfully still, a Mr. Jardine."

"About Mr. Jardine I know nothing. If he is a friend of this Baines, I dare say he is a scoundrel too. He must be a precious scoundrel to be a worse; that is all I can say."

"A scoundrel, John!—that is a very hard word."

"Not too hard. He is a scoundrel, that Captain Baines. If he is not a scoundrel, Beatrice, then—I am a Dutchman"; and Uncle John plumped himself down in an arm-chair, and played what is vulgarly called the devil's tattoo upon a little table standing by it.

"Algernon, I think, is coming to luncheon," said Mrs. Wyndham. "Would it not be proper to speak to him on this subject? If Captain Baines is the really bad man you believe him to be, my son ought to know it, that he may avoid his company; but I think, John, you ought to bring some proof beyond this vague accusation."

The footman now announced luncheon, and the conversation was thus for the present interrupted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DISCLOSURE AND A CONSULTATION.

ALGERNON came when the luncheon was half over, which prolonged the sitting. Emma, who never remained longer than she could well help in her uncle's company, and who had not felt in good humour with her brother since he had turned monitor, was not disposed to linger; so, when she had finished, she disappeared, carrying off Gertrude to accompany her in a song which she was practising.

"Come, Gertrude, let us profit by the empty room upstairs," she said. The acquiescent sister obeyed, and the three others were left alone.

Mrs. Wyndham seized the opportunity, and entered at once on the subject which so painfully occupied her mind. "Algernon," she said, "your uncle has made me extremely uncomfortable by telling me that he knows something very discreditable of Captain Baines, and by seeming not to reckon him proper company for any one."

"That is going very far, certainly," replied her son; "I do not myself suppose that Baines is exactly a model of propriety, but he is quite as respectable, I imagine, as a great many whom your London world delights to honour."

"Baines is a cheat," said Sanders; "that is the long and the short of it, or, rather, the short of it, for it would be a long enough story to catalogue his offences. Whatever the London world may honour—I know very little about the London world—I suppose it does not honour vulgar cheating."

"A cheat?" said Algernon. "Do you mean that he cheats at cards?"

"Yes, I mean that he cheats at cards, and no mistake about it."

"That is a serious charge, indeed. Baines is a very good and lucky card-player, I know ; but I never heard a suspicion cast on his fair dealing."

"Seeing is believing, as they say," replied the uncle ; and he proceeded to detail how Baines had spent some months at Palermo, where his reputation in other respects did not stand very high, and where he was noted as a successful gamester. Having conceived a suspicion of him, grounded on various circumstances into which it is unnecessary to enter, Sanders had taken the occasion of a party at the English Consul's, to which he was invited, to watch the card-table where Baines was seated. Standing behind unobserved, he carried away in the course of the time he thus spent the unmistakable conviction that Baines was guilty of dishonesty in his play. "I called at his lodgings the next day," said Sanders, "and taxed him to his face with what I had seen. At first he tried to bluster, denying the charge indignantly ; but I said to him, 'Now, hark ye, Captain Baines. I am not a-going to allow you to disgrace my country any longer in this town where I live ; so, if you take on in this style—mark my words—I shall speak out of you as you deserve in all companies ; if you are wise, then, you will follow my advice and leave the place. Leave Palermo to-morrow, and don't set your foot again here. If you will do this, I will be silent as to what I saw yesterday evening, and not brand your character before the public ; reserving to myself, of course, the right to caution any friend of mine against you on whom you may ever intrude your acquaintanceship.' Well, after a short demur and further attempt to carry the matter with a high hand, seeing I was firm, he gave in ; and, growling like a cur as he is, he sneaked off with his tail between his legs. I heard of him later at Florence, where he was taken up by Lord and Lady Selden, or by my lady, at least : all which was talked about in worldly fashion."

"He is, or was, a sort of *cavaliere servente* to Lady Selden, I know," said Algernon ; "but as Lord Selden made full as much of him as did his wife, it was no one else's business to complain of the intimacy ; but this other matter is an ugly affair, we must allow. And here is my mother," he added, "hand and glove with this *chevalier d'industrie*, if so he be, and has, moreover, got him to dinner next Saturday" ; and Algernon could not help smiling at the ludicrous *fix* in which his respected parent was placed. There was an innate levity at the bottom of the young man's character, which prevented him from taking up anything with much earnestness, and rendered moral indignation almost a stranger to his bosom. An observant person might have read in the quick, shrewd eye of John Sanders that he noted this trait in his nephew's disposition.

"Your uncle says he will not come," said the truly unhappy mother.

"He certainly will not come ; whether or no he is aware I am staying here, he will be quite sure that I shall tell of him," said Sanders.

"If he does not come," observed Algernon, "that will condemn him. It will be a pleading guilty."

"I think his leaving Palermo, when I taxed him with cheating, was quite sufficient to condemn him without this fresh proof. I suppose you do not doubt my word?"

"Not in the least," replied the nephew, carelessly ; "it is an ugly business, certainly."

Sanders, having now delivered himself of all he had to say, made the sign of the cross—a pious practice apparently considered superfluous by the Wyndham family at the subsidiary meal of luncheon—rose from the table, and left the room. Mrs. Wyndham and her son remained alone.

"What shall I do, Algernon?" she exclaimed in a most disconsolate voice. "I never felt so completely knocked down in all my life."

"I don't know, mother, why you should take the thing so much to heart," replied the son, quietly pouring himself out a glass of wine. "You seem as much cut up about it as if you had been yourself detected in some fraudulent proceeding."

"But, my dear Algernon, is it not dreadful?"

"Which, my dear mother? The cheating at cards, or the having engaged the cheat to dinner?"

"Now, do be serious, Algernon, for it is a very serious matter indeed."

"Yes, it is very serious; and so am I serious, I assure you."

"Does it not seem scarcely credible?—when I remember his style and assurance!"

"There *are* such people in the world, and they commonly do not lack a certain style and much assurance, whatever else they may lack," replied Algernon; "but I must confess it had not occurred to me that Baines went so far as that."

"Was so bad as that?"

"I do not know what may be called bad. I did not think he was a man of chivalrous honour precisely, but I did not suspect him of being a downright vulgar knave."

"To sacrifice name, position, everything in that way—I cannot understand it."

"Gentry of that sort, mother, do not expect to be discovered; they run the risk for the sake of the advantage."

"But what a risk to any one who, as a gentleman, has a character to lose, has a good station in society, and has honourable connections besides! After all, is it possible, Algernon, do you think, that he may be an imaginary man?"

"My dear mother, you make me laugh; I cannot help it. What *do* you mean by 'an imaginary man'?"

"I mean what they call a 'man of straw.' He has mentioned an uncle in Yorkshire once or twice, who must, according to him, have some landed property ; for he said one day he was an 'excellent country squire, of the old-fashioned sort.' I pictured to myself a sort of Sir Roger de Coverley. Perhaps there is, in fact, no such person."

"I believe the uncle in Yorkshire is a reality, mother ; and Baines talks of him, certainly. But Yorkshire is a good way off, and we do not exactly know how the uncle talks of *him*."

"How did you get to know him in the first instance ?"

"I cannot quite recollect who introduced us to each other," said Algernon, continuing to sip his wine. "Is this some of the old boy's Marsala, mother ? it is very good."

"Yes, I believe so," said his mother, absently ; "but I want to know about your introduction to this man."

"Well, I do not exactly remember, but I think it was at the Club we met first. Some one brought him in whom I knew, and made us acquainted. But Baines had a very good set of friends. I fancy the Seldens must have furnished him with letters of introduction to some of their relations ; so he started well. The Seldens themselves have only just come over."

"If it were not," said his mother, "for what John relates of his leaving Palermo when he taxed him with fraud, I could almost fancy that he might have imagined the whole thing. John has his prejudices."

"A good stock, I conceive. However, he has his whole story quite pat, chapter and verse, and is ready, as he would say himself, to take his *davy* of it. I fancy his dander would be considerably up, mother, if you were to question his accuracy."

"I am afraid it is too true," replied Mrs. Wyndham, despondingly ; "and now I remember I saw, when I glanced at Captain Baines for a moment, that he winced and looked

disconcerted. I thought it was in consequence of John's queer behaviour, and laid his hurried departure to the same cause."

Algernon now questioned her as to what had happened on the occasion, and inquired whether Emma had observed anything.

"I think not," said Mrs. Wyndham; "she was speaking to Gertrude, and it all passed so quick—he was gone like a shot. And now, what *am* I to do?"

"Nothing," said Algernon; "wait and see what Baines does. It is still a week before the dinner. Time enough to settle."

A ring at the door-bell was followed by the entrance of the footman with a note.

"Any one waiting for an answer?" asked Mrs. Wyndham.

"No, ma'am; Captain Baines's page left it."

Mrs. Wyndham tore the note open as soon as the servant was gone, passed her eye hastily over it, and said, "He does not come; just what John expected." Then she read it out loud.

"MY DEAR MRS. WYNDHAM,

"On my return to my lodging, I found a telegram awaiting me, which summoned me into Yorkshire on some pressing business. As I cannot be certain how many days I may be detained, I fear that I must at once renounce the pleasure of joining your agreeable party on Saturday evening.

"Believe me yours very sincerely,

"FREDERICK BAINES."

"Sincerely—indeed!"

"Come, mother, this gets you out of your difficulty."

"Out of the immediate difficulty, Algernon, but he will return; and then there is that Mr. Jardine!"

"He will come, no doubt," said her son ; "if he sneaked away too, it would be tantamount to confessing himself an accomplice, which I dare say he is. You must swallow that pill, I fear, mother."

"I suppose I must. Now about telling the girls—Emma, I mean?"

"Don't you do that, mother ; let be at present. Baines will not attempt to come near you or them so long as my uncle is here ; indeed, I dare say he has really left town ; though the telegram is a pretence, of course. He has plenty of friends, and has run off, depend upon it, to some house where he has established his footing. When my uncle goes, we can take some precaution about Emma."

"But why not sooner?"

"She would not believe the story ; she would say it was a calumny—a fabrication of my uncle's. She does not like him ; everything that comes from him she is sure to hold cheap and despise ; and Baines she *does* like, so is prejudiced deeply in his favour. Yes, mother, she *does* like Baines," he added, seeing her about to reply, "and more than you imagine, or I am very much mistaken. I know Emma so well ; and when she has got her head up about anything, she will not listen to reason ; she would be so furious with my uncle, you would not know what to do with her, and would heartily wish you had kept your counsel. Better leave her alone till he is gone. I would show her that note, of course, and then nothing more need be said at present."

"And your father, Algernon?"

"I don't think I should bother my father with the matter at all. What is the use? He does not think about Baines, and will soon forget his very existence."

To this view Mrs. Wyndham readily assented, and she ended in acquiescing in all her son's advice, as she usually did. "And how do you mean to act yourself, Algernon?" she said.

"I don't know. Baines will probably be shy of me too, and any way I shall manage to shake myself free of him when the time comes. Do not distress yourself about me, mother."

Algernon's nonchalance and indifference were quite refreshing to Mrs. Wyndham. She kissed him tenderly, telling him he was the greatest comfort to her.

"And I am sure, mother," he said, laughing, "you need not trouble yourself at all about this affair. Indeed, it is rather a fortunate occurrence, I think. Baines has saved you all embarrassment by taking himself off, and there is an end, at any rate, to Emma's flirtation."

"I shall show her this note, then?"

"Yes, I would show it at once, and do not look mysterious, as if we had been conspiring; and, above all, do not look important about the note, or as though you were relieved at Baines's not coming, or anything else."

"I will do my best," said the fond mother, patting her darling on the cheek, "and obey instructions." Thus warned, Mrs. Wyndham played her part tolerably well. "Here, girls," she said, "we have a vacancy on Saturday, after all. I have just got this note"—she handed it to Emma—"Captain Baines cannot come."

Emma's countenance fell at this announcement. "Cannot come! how is that?" and she cast her eye over the letter. "A telegram—I suppose his uncle is taken ill."

"Urgent business he says, you see, but it is all the same to us as respects the consequences."

"So we are at sea again," said Emma, glad to veil her disappointment under apparent solicitude about the dinner party.

"I do not mean to put myself out of the way about it," replied her mother; "we shall do mighty well, I dare say. If I see any man who would suit, I will ask him; if not, Gertrude can dine with us and fill up the gap."

"Then I hope, Mama, you will see a man to suit, for I do so dislike dinners. I do not not know what to say to my next neighbours, and am always sure they must think me so dull and stupid."

"Nonsense, child!" said Mrs. Wyndham; "no one expects girls to say much at dinners."

"You must learn to talk," said Emma, trying to seem unconcerned on account of Algernon's presence; "it is only practice which teaches the art."

"I should think, Emma, you were born with the ready-made talent," said her brother; "at least it came early into exercise."

"There you are mistaken, Algernon; even if I was born with the talent, it required practice to make it available. I remember so well, when I first came out, how I used to rummage in my head for a topic. That comes easy afterwards, and one can talk about anything and everything, or nothing at all, without the least effort."

"Where is my brother John?" asked Mrs. Wyndham. "I thought he came up here."

"No, Mama; we have not seen my uncle since luncheon," said Gertrude.

"He must be in his bedroom," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham; and she went down in search of him.

Algernon left the drawing-room along with her. "Good-bye, girls," he called out to them. "Mother, I am off now."

"And you really cannot go with us to Richmond on Tuesday?"

"No, quite impossible." This was on the staircase, as they were descending together.

"I do not think Mama is sorry that Captain Baines cannot come," said Emma, when the door was closed.

"Why should she be glad, Em?" replied Gertrude; "she asked him herself."

"Yes, she asked him herself, but she was different then.

When he called this morning she was not what she usually is ; not cordial, I mean. I am sure she was not, the more I think of it."

Gertrude looked at her sister, and noted her clouded, discontented brow. "You fancy all this, Emma," she said ; "what can have made Mama different to Captain Baines?"

"Some one has prejudiced her against him, I am certain, and I dare say he perceived the change. Perhaps this is why he does not come, and makes the excuse of being afraid that he will not be back from Yorkshire in time."

The return of Mrs. Wyndham put a stop to the dialogue. "Your uncle must be gone out," she said, "for I cannot find him."

"I dare say, Mama, now I come to think of it," observed Gertrude, "that he has gone to the church. He was asking about the hours for hearing confessions in the middle of the day, as he cannot go later on account of dinner."

"What is to-morrow? Anything particular?" asked Emma.

"I dare say my brother goes to confession every Saturday," said Mrs. Wyndham ; "he is very regular and strict about his religious duties."

"I cannot think," said Emma, "what any one can have to confess, going so often. That puzzles me very much."

"Does it?" said her younger sister.

"There is the carriage!" exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham. "I did not know it was so late. Get your things on, girls."

But Gertrude excused herself, on the plea of fatigue, from driving out that afternoon, and remained gazing out of the window in a listless manner while her mother and sister were preparing, for she was not thinking of anything on which her eye rested. Soon the carriage rolled off, and she went back to the table, where her as yet unfinished

novel was lying. She took it up for a moment, and then laid it down again, as if not in a mood for such reading, half thinking and half muttering audibly, "I wish I could have gone to Farm Street with my uncle."



CHAPTER XXIV.

SUSPICION AROUSED AND CONFIDENCE RESTORED.

THE Sunday passed over quietly and without bringing any special mortification or annoyance. John Sanders went to an early Mass, and afterwards with the family to High Mass at eleven o'clock. At luncheon he announced that he was eating his dinner. "You told me to make myself at home," he said to his sister and brother-in-law, "so I am going to do so by not being at home for dinner. I want to go to Benediction this evening."

"But you must have some dinner, John, when you return, or a meat supper," said Mrs. Wyndham.

"I will have nothing of the sort," said John; "I am victualling-up now. Perhaps an egg at tea, and bread and butter *ad libitum*."

"Some cold meat, at any rate," urged his sister, who was a great one for *support*.

"Let him do as he pleases," said her husband; "people like to do as they please. Sanders will ask for what he wants."

"You may depend on my singing out if I feel peckish," observed Uncle John; and so the matter rested.

Gertrude would have liked to go to Benediction with him, and was in hopes, for a moment, that he would have

asked her, but he did not ask her, and she did not venture to suggest such a thing herself. She somehow instinctively felt that the proceeding would be viewed as an inconvenience, and would not be liked by her parents. The proposal on her part would be sure, besides, to create surprise, and Gertrude did not like exciting surprise ; persons who want for moral courage seldom do. She did not, indeed, account to herself for the persuasion that her absence from the family board in order to go to Benediction would not be favourably regarded ; but I think it was well grounded.

John Sanders, then, went alone, and returned to make a substantial meal of boiled eggs and bread and butter.

"I think I should like to know those French friends of yours," he observed, as he was taking his candle before retiring to his room, at about a quarter to eleven. "What was the lady's name ? I forget."

"The Marquise d'Héricourt," replied Mrs. Wyndham, in a hesitating manner. "She is not very accessible, but I have no doubt——"

"I don't want to cram myself on any one," quickly rejoined her brother.

"It is not that," replied Mrs. Wyndham, who was evidently embarrassed. "The fact is she lives very retired, and I have a notion that she admits very few gentlemen."

"That is, *young* gentlemen, I fancy," interposed Gertrude. "I do not think she would mind my uncle at all."

"What do you mean by that, Miss Saucebox ? Do you mean I am an old man ? I flattered myself I was in the prime of my days."

"Oh, not old ! uncle, exactly."

"Only a steady safe age, you think. The young ladies are not likely to fall in love with me. That is rather mortifying. However, you have not seen me yet with my

new teeth. But how did nephew Algernon slip in, I wonder?"

"That was under cover of Emma's illness in the house," replied Mrs. Wyndham.

"Madame never regretted but once, I suspect, his having got in," said Emma.

"Don't say that, Emma," said her mother; "we have no ground for saying anything of the kind."

"No, but we have some for thinking it," replied the daughter.

Mrs. Wyndham scraped her throat.

John Sanders now addressed a general "good-night" to the whole party, and went off to bed. Mr. Wyndham was already asleep in his arm-chair; he was always dozy on Sunday evenings.

"I cannot say I enjoy taking my brother John to introduce him to the Marquise," said Mrs. Wyndham in a perplexed voice.

"His manners signify less with her than with any one else," said Emma. "Madame d'Héricourt is not fond of people of the world, and will think my uncle a rough diamond,—rough, perhaps, but still a diamond. Besides, she is three parts French; do not you perceive her foreign accent? English does not come so naturally to her really as does French; and foreigners are not so discriminating or sensitive about our manners or pronunciation as we are ourselves, any more than we are about theirs."

"I dare say you are right, and I am by no means unwilling that my brother should know the family; but I do not think I am the best person to go with him. We are always rather ceremonious together somehow—Madame and myself. She will just see him—not the best of him, for really I must say my brother is a worthy man, though his appearance is against him."

"He is, indeed," echoed Gertrude warmly.

“And so she will not get acquainted with him at all, but will politely talk to me, and then we shall take our leave, and so it will end.” Mrs. Wyndham’s observation was a just one. It was a good reason for her not going, though not the motive entirely—perhaps not the motive at all, but merely the pretext. She was ashamed of her brother ; that was the truth, and her false pride rendered it too great an effort for her to master the feeling. “Besides,” she added, “I have my accounts to settle to-morrow morning, as the rest of the week will be so much taken up.”

“I shall be very glad to see the girls,” said Gertrude, “and can walk there with my uncle.”

“That will do nicely,” replied her mother ; “and Emma had better go too.”

“I would rather not,” replied that young lady curtly.

“I think you had better go, my love,” said the mother ; “it is always Gertrude ; and your uncle will begin to suspect that you avoid him.”

“I have to practise my singing for the party—just as pressing a matter as your accounts, Mama ; but it is not because of my uncle that I dislike going, for I do not mind much what Madame may think of him, but I am not over anxious to present myself before her ; I am sure she would rather not see me.”

“Not see you, Emma, and after being so kind to you ?”

“Yes, she was kind to me, and I shall best show my gratitude by staying away. She was very chilly last time I paid a visit ; that was about ten days ago, when you went to ask her to the party ; I have a notion she suspects that it was owing to me that Algernon had an opportunity of proposing ; and if so, she suspects rightly.”

“You made a very unguarded remark, my dear, just now with reference to Algernon. It was calculated to suggest the idea that Madame d’Héricourt had a personal objection to him.”

"I do not think Madame dislikes him at all," said Emma; "but I am sure that she very much objects to him as a suitor for Anne. She wants her to marry that book-worm, who never utters a word; but I do not suppose that what I said was noticed."

"I am not so certain of that. John has his wits about him, and is somewhat suspicious in his way, and inquisitive besides—very. I fancy that his desire to know our French friends is in consequence of what I mentioned about Algernon's attachment."

"I don't believe a word of that," replied her daughter. "He does not feel a morsel of interest about Algernon, I am positive. He wants to know Madame d'Héricourt because he heard she was a devout Catholic; that is all; and as for Algernon's chances of matrimony in that quarter, if you ask my opinion, Mama,"—Mrs. Wyndham had *not* asked it—"I would not give five shillings for them."

"And what will he do if he fails? His heart is so set upon that girl," exclaimed the mother pathetically.

"Whatever he does, he will not break his heart," replied Emma. "About *him* no one need be uneasy. But what will he do? you say. Well, after lamenting himself for a short time, he will turn elsewhere, perhaps go back to his former flame, Lady Jane Follett, who has not discovered, I dare say, this aberration of his affections."

"I should not like Lady Jane Follett for a daughter-in-law," said Mrs. Wyndham.

"Not like her, Mama? Why, I should have thought she was just what you *would* like. 'My daughter, Lady Jane,' would sound so well, and a Marquis's daughter, besides! Quite in your way, I should have imagined."

"For the matter of that," replied her mother, without advertg to Emma's satirical tone—Emma was always satirical when out of humour—"Anne's father was a marquis also."

"Yes, a French marquis, if you will ; but a marquis only because he inherited the lands of a marquisate."

"I do not understand those distinctions," said Mrs. Wyndham. "All I know is that Lady Lanark looks very high indeed for her daughters. They must have rank and title, and, if not these, then they must have great fortune, which makes amends and confers position. Your brother has neither title nor fortune to offer, but I am sure he is only too good for Lady Jane ; and I could not bear the idea of any one turning up her nose at my Algernon."

"I do not fancy that Lady Jane would turn up hers at him," replied Emma, "even if it were not decidedly aquiline ; but the higher powers would, I dare say."

"They certainly would ; and then his religion would be an obstacle besides."

"As for his religion, I do not suppose that Lady Jane has a notion that Algernon is a Catholic ; but, of course, that would come out if things began to look serious."

"Of course it would ; such a match is out of the question in every way ; and anyhow I prefer Anne d'Héricourt," said her mother—who, it must be allowed, here showed her good sense—"and my boy prefers her ; and this alone would be sufficient to make me wish for this match, which would be indeed a very creditable one."

Emma secretly wondered if her own preferences would weigh as powerfully in her mother's estimation.

It was settled, of course, that Gertrude alone should accompany her uncle to make this call ; Emma was never pressed to do what she disliked. Nothing was said with reference to her the next morning, and John Sanders asked nothing. A parade of the household accounts was made by his sister as an excuse for not being of the party, and readily accepted by him ; indeed, I suspect he was all the better pleased not to have her company on the occasion.

Mrs. Wyndham had judged it proper to write a note over-

night to Madame d'Héricourt, that she might not be taken by surprise. It ran as follows :—

“MY DEAR MADAME D'HÉRICOURT,

“Gertrude is proposing to pay your daughters a visit to-morrow morning, and my brother, Mr. Sanders, who is spending a few days with us, has expressed a desire to make your acquaintance. As I know your retired mode of life, I was unwilling that he should intrude upon you without first obtaining your permission. My brother has lived in Italy for many years, quite out of the world, and is consequently a complete stranger to English society. But I have no doubt that you will excuse his unfamiliarity with the world and its ways. With love to your daughters, believe me

“Most faithfully yours,

“BEATRICE WYNDHAM.”

Emma thought this concluding observation unnecessary. “It is plainly an apology, and is a bad apology, for Uncle John is not foreign at all in his manners ; so the remark only draws attention.” But her mother would not yield this time, and the note was sealed, ready for James to take early the next morning. Accordingly a favourable answer had awaited Mrs. Wyndham on the breakfast-table.

Emma had opined that her uncle felt no interest or curiosity about Algernon's love affair, but in this she was mistaken, for the first observation which he made to his companion when they were fairly started referred to this matter.

“He has not popped the question yet, I suppose?—nephew Algernon, I mean.” He always called him “nephew Algernon” ; and from the tone in which he said it one might argue that something not altogether complimentary to that young man was implied thereby. His father's appellation of “that fellow” certainly had a meaning—that

meaning being that on two several occasions he had paid his son's debts.

"O, yes, he has," replied Gertrude; "did not Mama tell you so?" Gertrude, it must be observed, had left the room just as the conversation which occurred on the morning after Sanders's arrival was beginning. She concluded that all had been told, and had no suspicion of her mother's diplomatic reserves or insinuations.

"I did not understand your Mama to say that exactly; only that he was sure of success. So he has proposed; and—was accepted?"

"Yes, in a way; only Anne referred him to her mother."

"Like a good girl; and what said Mama?"

"I do not know what she said to Anne; we none of us know; all we know is what she said to Algernon, which was, that she did not feel sufficiently acquainted with him yet; that her daughter was very young; and that at present the thing must not go any farther; so he was to discontinue his visits. But did not Mama explain all this to you?"

"Your mother entered into no particulars, but I understood that she expected pecuniary objections on the part of Madame."

"I have not heard anything about that; indeed, I do not think that the affair had gone far enough for money to be mentioned. I am sure it would not be Madame d'Héricourt's first thought, at any rate."

"What would be her first thought?"

"She would think first whether he was a good, religious man, I am sure. Anne has been brought up very strictly, and her mother has very determined ideas about education and marriage, and women's duties, and—and—suitable husbands."

"And you do not think nephew Algernon would quite come up to her ideas of the proper sort of husband?"

"I was not going to say that," replied Gertrude, "for how can I know?"

"But what do you yourself think?"

Gertrude paused a moment, and then rejoined, "I could not say, uncle, really. We are very fond of Algernon, and we do not think he could have a better wife than Anne d'Héricourt. He will not find as good a one, I am certain, among his partners at balls; I wish with all my heart he may succeed. I am sure he would be a kind and affectionate husband, at all events; and I dare say he would give up the gay world if he had a happy home."

After this, there was a short silence. John Sanders, I guess, had by this time discovered two things: first, that his sister had hardly given a correct representation of the state of affairs; and secondly, that Gertrude, in her heart, considered that Algernon was too much a man of the world to find favour with Anne's mother, but was unwilling to say so; he was too good-natured therefore to question her any farther. Perhaps—I say only perhaps—he thought he had discovered something more. At any rate a suspicion may have crossed his mind which had once before been half aroused. Mrs. Wyndham was not so wrong in attributing a certain proneness to suspicion on the part of the worthy man; but this tendency did not proceed from an evil heart. Plain, honest, and straightforward, as was John Sanders, he was a shrewd man also, and his business had thrown him in the way of men of all sorts, in his dealings with whom he had not seldom encountered fraud and deceit; caution had therefore become a necessity to him, if he would not be imposed upon; and this had given him the habit of taking the moral measure of those with whom he came in contact. Above all, anything like finesse, manœuvring, or diplomacy was abhorrent to him, and he was sharp in detecting it; so that by such ways as these Mrs. Wyndham was not likely to forward her views in favour of her son.

While the two are on the road, let us leave them for a moment, to recount a dialogue which passed between Anne and her mother that morning, while they were sitting together for an hour's needlework in Madame d'Héricourt's boudoir. This was commonly the time for mutual confidences, the giving or asking of advice, and other conversation of a character which does not so well admit of the presence of a third person. Madame d'Héricourt dedicated another hour to work and conversation in the afternoon, when both daughters were present; but the morning hour was always reserved for the elder, and Pauline was never of the party.

"Mama," said Anne, "I have been thinking—thinking a great deal."

"What about, my love?"

"Well, principally about Mr. Wyndham." There was *naïveté* certainly in such an avowal.

"I dare say you have," replied the mother in a cheerful voice, which, it must be owned, was not a very accurate exponent of her interior sentiments.

"But not exactly in the way you perhaps suppose, Mama. I have been wondering whether we should be happy together. It depends, I am convinced, upon what I have no means of ascertaining. Will you let me explain myself?"

"Do, my dear child, with all freedom."

"Well, then, I like Gertrude Wyndham very much, but I do not like Emma at all; and I am not sure that I like Mrs. Wyndham either, only I do not know her as well as I do the girls. If Mr. Wyndham is like Emma, I am sure I could not be happy with him; but if he is like Gertrude, I think I could."

Madame d'Héricourt saw that she was appealed to for an opinion. "I think Mr. Algernon Wyndham has a much sweeter temper and disposition than his sister

Emma," she said ; " I must add another point in his favour, and I do not hesitate to say *much* in his favour—he seems to me very respectful and affectionate to his mother. I never like, as you know, to pass a hasty judgment, but a few slight things would have led me not to have the same confidence in Emma's case. To be a good son or a good daughter is a pledge, so far, that the individual would behave well in other relations of life. Mind, I do not mean to accuse Emma of undutifulness; that would, indeed, be a rash judgment; but she appears to lack a certain tenderness towards her mother, which her brother Algernon always unaffectedly manifests."

"How just and impartial you always are, dear Mama!" replied Anne; "and as respects Emma I am afraid you are not mistaken. She was more at her ease with me; you scarcely know her. It is partly levity of talk, I dare say, but I must own I was often shocked at her tone about her mother. But now, to come back to what I was saying—I perceive that her brother is not at all like her in these things. He has not her flippancy or irreverence; he is, indeed, much more natural, I think; for Emma, after all, Mama, is not natural. A great deal which she says is only a making of conversation, I can see. What I am anxious to know, however, is what there is below the surface. I am afraid Emma is worldly. Is *he* worldly?"

Madame d'Héricourt was silent, for she scarcely knew what to reply. Anne had asked the very question which she had often asked herself; and, it must be added, with little doubt as to the true answer; but she did not like to say this.

So Anne resumed. "It seems to me that persons may for a time seek and like amusement, which does not satisfy them really, and to those who do not know them, they may appear as fond of the world as the others are. This is Gertrude's state, I should say. If Gertrude was to marry

a good man who did not care for the world, she would not care for it ever again ; but I fancy if Emma did, possibly she would not think she cared for anything but him at first, but I suspect she would go back to it."

Madame d'Héricourt, well as she knew her daughter, was hardly prepared for observations evincing so much reflection and penetration, and that in a matter where her feelings, if not her heart also, were interested. She thought it best, however, rather to encourage Anne to speak than to say much herself. She contented herself, then, with observing that Mr. Wyndham would probably expect his wife to go into society with him.

"Into the gay world?" said Anne musingly. "I do not feel fitted for the gay world ; and, indeed, I shrink from it. I should not like mixing with general society, and yet I should not like remaining at home and leaving my husband to go alone, if he wished me to accompany him ; neither should I like his giving up the world simply to please me. Perhaps, after awhile, home might seem dull to him, unless he should be fond of reading, or some other occupation. And that is another thing—I wonder whether Mr. Wyndham cares for reading. I should dread an idle man ; I should not be able to amuse an unoccupied person, I am certain ; and it would make me unhappy."

"What has made you think of all this, my love?"

"When I see him I do not think of these things, Mama," replied Anne, "because I like him very much, and he seems to have no thought but of me. I cannot exactly say how it is, but no deficiency strikes me at the time ; all seems as it should be ; I cannot see a fault ; then, afterwards, these thoughts will occur."

"It is very natural, my dear," rejoined her mother. "Mr. Wyndham is eminently pleasing ; there is something winning about him, which I myself recognize, and which

disarms criticism ; indeed, he never provokes censure by any remark of his own. And then it is very sweet to feel oneself loved ; every one knows that. You see I am not surprised ; still I do not believe we should be a bit the wiser on the points you desire to see cleared up after another year's personal acquaintance with Mr. Wyndham. There is one thing which it would certainly be most essential to ascertain before coming to any decision, and that would be easier, I imagine ; I mean his religious principles and habits. You seemed satisfied that they are good ; this is a point, however, upon which any mistake would be fatal to happiness."

"I am as much convinced of this as you are, Mama," replied Anne, with much warmth ; "and I was coming to that point ; though I mention it last, it is first in my esteem. I could make up my mind to my husband having faults, even great faults ; I should consider it my duty to bear with them, and I hope I should study by a good example to win him to correct them ; but if he wanted principle, and was irreligious—Oh, Mama, I could not bear that ! Never, knowingly, would I become the wife of one who did not love and fear God above all things."

Madame d'Héricourt laid down her work, took her daughter's hand in hers—they were sitting very near each other—and drew her fondly towards her. "Did you doubt it, mother dear ?" said Anne, looking up with those sweet, dove-like eyes of hers, which had so captivated the heart of the votary of the world as almost to make that world distasteful to him.

"O, no, never, my child ; only I love to hear you say so."

"Well, I *was* satisfied, or thought myself so," continued Anne, still leaving her hand clasped in her mother's ; "I think I told you so. I not only never heard Mr. Wyndham say one word which looked like a disregard of religious principles or devout practices, or anything relating to them, but I remember also that he used to listen with marked

interest to whatever observations I may have hazarded on these topics. I do not exactly recollect that he originated anything himself; it was more as if he liked to hear me talk about them, and was glad to lead me on to do so; and this silence did not strike me as strange. But now I must explain to you how a misgiving first arose within me, or how I first became aware that I *had* a secret misgiving; for it must have been there, I fancy, all the time, since nothing fresh had come to my knowledge. I strove to follow the good advice which you gave me, Mama, when last we talked about Mr. Wyndham, and I behaved so ill; I mean I tried to lay the subject aside for the present and to commit the future into God's hands. I had some success, and felt much calmer. A few days afterwards, when we were at Mass, and were kneeling before the altar, the thought shot as it were into my mind, for I had in no way led to it myself:—Suppose hereafter, when I am married, I should have day by day to come here alone, and kneel here by myself, my husband never coming to join his prayers with mine, save, perhaps, on the Sundays, and then without devotion, and as a mere inevitable compliance with duty! I felt as if to live such a life would break my heart; and I said to myself that I could be happier in a desert, seeing no one, only the birds and the beasts, than with a man of that sort—a man of the world. All day this idea kept recurring to me, and I endeavoured to recollect whether Mr. Wyndham had ever said anything which threw a light on his daily religious practices, but I could not recall a syllable of the kind. All I knew was that the rest of the family were not in the habit of going to Mass on week-days; this I knew for certain from Gertrude, who regretted it. She thought that it might be easily managed, occasionally at least, but, except on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, she said, it was not thought of, and she could not propose it. Their brother does not live with them, it is true; she was not, therefore, speaking

of him ; but somehow I cannot flatter myself with the hope that his habits are different from theirs. Why had not I thought of this before ? I cannot tell. Perhaps if he married, he might change, supposing change is needed, but I should not have the courage to marry a man with the task before me of converting him."

"It is a task few may venture on, my child," replied her mother. "Charity to our own souls, our first duty, must lead us to seek rather such associates as will fortify our weakness."

"Yet, Mama, though I have said all this," continued Anne, "I do not like him less than I did. The image of him is as pleasing to me as ever, and, when I think of giving him up, it pains me. But, dear mother, the story of Aunt Anne has not been lost upon me, and, though I cannot be as good as she was, yet I can so far imitate her at a distance that I will never be joined to one who is not himself joined in heart to God ; and should I find that so it is with Mr. Wyndham, then, indeed, I will discard him at once from my thoughts and endeavour to forget him, however much it may cost me—and it would cost me a good deal."

Madame d'Héricourt folded her daughter in her arms, and together they wept a few sweet and silent tears. The mother's tears were sweet indeed, for they were tears of gratitude to God as much as of maternal affection.

"And now, Mama," said Anne, raising her face, and speaking in a cheerful voice, though the bright drops still sparkled in her eyes, "I have a request to make ; which is, that the inquiry you meant to postpone till our return in spring you will make now at once. I wish to set my mind at rest ; this uncertainty is both painful and hurtful to me ; I know it is. I do not wish to ask you to alter your proposed plan, even if the result of inquiries should prove favourable ; but if it does not, then I should wish that Mr. Wyndham should at once be made acquainted with my

resolution. In either case, I shall feel much calmer, and more fit to profit by the retreat we are going to make. In the former I shall be able to recommend the affair peacefully to God; in the latter—well, in the latter I shall be free to recommend my future to Him with no bias, secret or avowed, and to seek light as to the state of life which He designs for me. At present I scarcely know how to compose my mind, owing to this state of uncertainty. If that uncertainty could be removed I should be very thankful, as I should then see my way clearly before me. I hope you do not think this either unreasonable or impatient in me.”

“Not in the least, my child; I fully understand you. You naturally dislike prolongation of doubt as to Mr. Wyndham’s essential worthiness; as, if it should be true that he does not possess those principles which you feel to be indispensable, you would desire at once to rid yourself of your preference, and dismiss the recollection of him from your mind, instead of keeping your feelings in abeyance for months, to the disturbance of your inward peace, and, perhaps, ultimate greater disappointment.”

Anne assented, and her mother assured her that she would avail herself of whatever opportunities might present themselves, during the remainder of their stay in London, to procure the desired information; adding, however, that her very limited circle of acquaintance rendered the inquiry far from easy. All was, however, now as it should be between mother and daughter; each felt and knew she could trust the other, and mutual confidence was fully restored. Truly it was a happy morning for both of them.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNCLE JOHN MAKES A FRIEND.

UNCLE JOHN and his niece reached the door of Madame d'Héricourt's house soon after twelve o'clock. Gertrude knew the habits of the family, and thought that this would be a convenient hour. The lady of the house was alone in the drawing-room when the two were ushered in. Uncle John was duly introduced, and surprised Gertrude by making a very good bow. Madame d'Héricourt extended her hand very cordially to him, she kissed Gertrude, and then the three were soon seated, and exchanging those general introductory remarks usual when acquaintances meet.

"Anne and Pauline are in the Square with the *bonne*," said Madame d'Héricourt, in reply to a question of Gertrude's. "These fine mornings they like sitting out and getting the air, Madame Péron included. She takes her work, and they have their books; but I expect them back every moment"

"Such air as Grosvenor Square affords," said Sanders. "I am reckoned a good John Bull in most things, but I cannot praise the climate of my native land."

"John Bull is reckoned a grumbler, is he not?" said Madame d'Héricourt; "and I am sure, at any rate, there is nothing of which people usually complain so much as of the weather."

"It is not the weather so much as the atmosphere."

"My uncle is used to a Sicilian sky," observed Gertrude; "so the change to a London one must be dismal, even at our best season."

"Well, it is dismal enough, but it is not the look of things that I am thinking of, though I am not quite insen-

sible to that either, but my own feelings. One breathes in a thick medium on the clearest of days in this country ; we seem to want gills, or some such apparatus, instead of lungs."

"I find the air lighter in France myself," replied Madame d'Héricourt.

"But I do not think, Madame, that the climate of your *belle France* suits me either. I went over to the South early this spring, in the way of my business, and got a taste of the *bise*. I was laid up at Marseilles for three weeks, and have not quite got over that attack yet. No, I must live and die in Sicily, I suspect. Besides, I like the country."

The conversation now turned on Italy, which Madame d'Héricourt had visited, although she had not been in Sicily. Her new acquaintance was at home on this subject ; his knowledge of the country, the people, their habits, manners, virtues, faults, and all that concerned them, acquired in the course of years of association with natives of all classes, was very extensive. He was a good observer, his remarks were both sensible and pertinent, and the information he could give was interesting. Cumbered with no shyness or reserve, John Sanders was invariably quite at his ease, but, as he was also perfectly simple and devoid of vanity, he was at the same time free from vulgar forwardness or pretension. His sister and eldest niece had often applied to him the epithet of "vulgar," as we have seen. I have let the remark pass, but I must here enter a protest against John Sanders being set down as vulgar. That word is commonly used very loosely, and in different senses. If a lack of polish and exterior refinement make a man vulgar, then certainly Sanders was vulgar. If the want of a liberal education, a deficiency not compensated, but rather the reverse, by early associations, render a man vulgar, then Sanders was vulgar. He was the son of a tradesman,

a shopkeeper in a mere second-rate provincial town. As a boy, he had not been sent to a high-class school, and, such as the school was which he frequented, he had not been left there long, but had been placed, while still very young, in a house of business engaged in the wine trade. His good practical abilities, combined with those moral qualities which recommend a young man to offices of trust, had enabled him to make his way and prosper; and he had laudably employed his leisure in the acquisition of a good deal of multifarious knowledge. Still his education had necessarily remained incomplete, and then—his tongue betrayed him. There was that indescribable imperfection occasionally in the enunciation of vowels which is sure to characterize the uneducated, and specially the uneducated provincial, unless his ear has been early cultivated and corrected by mingling with those who have enjoyed superior training; and if this process does not begin early, the fault is seldom completely eradicated. Yet all this does not make a man essentially vulgar. To be really vulgar, there must exist some moral defect or deficiency. In Sanders there was nothing low, mean, or ignoble; no sentiment or feeling was to be found in him which would have disgraced the highest gentleman in the land; and such being the case, I will not allow him to be called vulgar. It is the presence of vulgarity of mind which imparts its chief offensiveness to those external marks of inferior breeding to which allusion has been made, and stamps man or woman as vulgar—an epithet which many a person who is entirely free from them will often richly deserve. In this sense, Mrs. Wyndham was truly vulgar, but her brother was not so. It would have surprised her much to have been told this; neither she nor Emma, however, reasoned or reflected on the subject, but used the word as it is used so frequently in common parlance. With them a person was vulgar whose language or manners betrayed an inferior origin or education; the

education, be it observed, being valued as an appanage or pledge of good station. Now Sanders's tongue revealed this unpleasant fact ; and, as he was the brother of the one lady, and the uncle of the other, there was no escaping from a mortifying conclusion. Gertrude, who had far less pride, was not so sensitive on this point, as we have seen ; and the entire absence of genuine vulgarity in the kind and worthy man reconciled her to the want of some external refinement and cultivation. She observed this want, and was not indifferent to it by any means ; I think, indeed, that it would have mortified her in a brother, but in an uncle it was another thing ; the removal of a generation and the age rendered his innocent rusticities very bearable ; and his simplicity and humour made them sometimes even rather amusing. He was, in fact, a *character* ; and, if polished up, he would have been hardly worth as much. And then he was a good man and a devout man, and Gertrude dearly loved goodness and devotion, under whatever garb she met with them.

While we are talking of John Sanders, he and Madame d'Héricourt are in full conversation, and that lady is "getting on" with him, as Emma would have expressed it, much better than she ever did with his more fashionable sister. Madame d'Héricourt probably adverted to the so-called vulgarity of her visitor less even than Gertrude ; partly because she had long trained her mind to avoid that scrutiny of persons with whom we come in contact which is the fruitful source of so much uncharitableness, and partly for the reason which Emma had given for expecting her to be less observant in this matter. She was more French than English in her associations and habits.

"Here they come !" exclaimed Gertrude, who was watching at the window ; "they are almost running."

"They know they are late," replied the mother ; "my Poll, I suspect, will, as usual, prove to be the culprit."

The girls soon made their appearance, with all the heightened bloom on their cheeks which their hurried walk had called up. Certainly they did no discredit to a London climate. They were, of course, introduced to the stranger, and Anne was beginning to explain the cause of their delay, but was fairly talked down by the more voluble Pauline, who could scarcely wait until the ceremony of introduction was over.

"O, Mama! we have had such a chase after Kitty!—Such a dance as it has led us! We thought we should never catch it, the little rogue!" and she stopped an instant to kiss the truant, who was wrapped up in the folds of her shawl—it was not our old friend, Tommy, but a new favourite. "In and out of the bushes it went, and dodged us so cunningly; just when we had it, off it bounced again, and at last climbed up a tree. But Madame Péron caught it by standing on tip-toe, we propping her up; she got hold of its tail, and pulled it down as the nigger did the opossum"; and Pauline laughed with all her heart as she recounted this happy result.

"But, my dear," said her mother, "what made you think of taking the kitten into the Square?"

John Sanders had now drawn near and begged to see the lively animal. "I am partial to cats," he said; "and this is a splendid kitten, I must say. Just look at its stripes and its tail, which is long as well as thick; it is seldom both."

"And look at its whiskers," added Pauline. "It is like a miniature tiger"; and she eyed Sanders complacently while he scratched the kitten's head as one familiar with the office. "I do so love people to love cats!" she exclaimed.

"They say, 'Love me, love my dog,'" said Sanders, "but this is much better, and a great comfort to an old fellow like me, to have a young lady say to him, 'If you will love my cat, I will love you.'"

"But I did not say that," replied the merry girl, laughing and colouring. "I said I loved people *to* love cats, not *who* love cats."

"My dear Pauline, that is rather pert," said her mother, while Anne, who looked more ashamed than did Madame d'Héricourt, pulled her sister's sleeve as a reminder.

"I have the weakness, I believe, to like impertinent young ladies as well as playful kittens," said Sanders.

"Our Pauline is nothing but a big child, though she is sixteen," replied the mother.

"A blessing on her!" said Sanders; "it is quite a treat to see a big child nowadays. Your modern misses shoot up into grown-up fine ladies before they have cut their wisdom teeth. I don't mean you, Gertrude; you are just saved from being a modern miss."

"Quite saved, I am sure," said Madame d'Héricourt, looking kindly at her.

Gertrude responded with an affectionate smile.

"Now, my dears, you had better go and take off your things at once; so much time has been lost that the drawing-master will be soon here."

"May I go with them for a moment?" asked Gertrude. Madame d'Héricourt nodded, and Gertrude ran after them, accompanying Anne to her room, which was separate from that of her younger sister. She thought she had a great many things to say to her friend, and, indeed, there were many things she would have wished to say, if possible, for she had not seen Anne by herself since the affair of Algonon's proposal; but she soon understood that this was *not* possible, for clearly Anne did not intend to allude to the subject, and Gertrude felt that it would be bad taste in her to introduce it or ask a single question with reference to it. So they talked of other matters.

"Your uncle seems very good-natured," said Anne.

"Yes, very. I never saw him before; at least, I do not

remember him, for he lives in Sicily, and seldom comes to England, but he has been so kind to me, and wants to take me back to pay him a visit at Palermo."

"And would you like to go?"

"Yes, I should; but I need not think about it; Mama would not like me to go, so I have not ventured to ask her."

"You have such bad coughs in the winter, it might do you good. This would be a motive for sparing you; and then Mrs. Wyndham is so indulgent to your wishes."

"No use thinking of it," interrupted Gertrude; "Emma would not like it, even if Mama allowed it; and I cannot do anything which Emma does not like. But I know Mama would not, any way, consent; she is very indulgent, as you say, in many things, but there are others in which one could not persuade her. She is not indulgent when she cannot enter into your reasons for wishing a thing, and she would not understand how I could wish for this. But, talking of indulgence, Anne, I cannot quite make out your mother. I know she is most kind—we all know that—but is she indulgent to you? Emma thought she was very strict with you both, and yet she hardly seems so."

"You mean about Pauline and her childish ways, do you not? She is very indulgent to Pauline, certainly; and about those cats in particular; I really am sometimes myself half surprised at her toleration. Pauline has two now, and there is no end of the fuss she makes about them. I verily believe, if she fancied a third, that Mama would put up with the addition."

"I suppose Pauline, being the youngest, is rather petted?"

"Not at all," replied Anne, quickly; "Mama has no such ideas as either petting or making favourites. She loves me quite as much as she does Pauline, but the fact of the matter is, she is much stricter with us as we get older, at least in some things. She gave us a great deal of liberty

as children, yet she was stricter with me at sixteen than she is with Poll, because, you see, Poll has remained a child so long in her disposition and tastes."

"It was just the contrary with us," said Gertrude; "as we got older we were more indulged, and had a great deal more freedom. Then, to be sure, we had a governess when we were little, and she was a disciplinarian, which Mama is not."

"I think young children are generally much indulged in France," said Anne; "and yet I should say that the respect of grown-up children for their parents is greater there than in England; but of course my experience is not very wide, so I hardly ought to hazard an opinion. As for Mama, I am sure she has acted on a system and on principle. She was very strict always about anything which was sinful and offended God, such as the least untruth, and she invariably made us obey her at once. She was particular, too, to prevent us doing anything which could inconvenience or annoy others, and she corrected any habits or ways which, she told us, were disagreeable, even though they seemed harmless, lest we should grow up with them; but beyond this she gave us very great freedom indeed, and we spent a most joyous childhood. Dear Mama is very glad not to shorten that happy time, and this is the history, I fancy, of her indulgence of Pauline. But you must not think, because I said Pauline was childish, that she is at all inferior in mind and abilities; on the contrary, she is much cleverer than I am; for instance, she has quite a genius for painting, and, what may surprise you more, a great facility in arithmetic, and a positive turn for mathematics."

"Mathematics!" repeated Gertrude—but whatever remark she was about to make was cut short by Anne's saying, "I think I hear the drawing-master's knock, and I must go and look after Pauline."

While the young friends were thus conversing above, the elders were talking on a very similar subject below, which had been suggested by Sanders's observation about "modern misses."

"You cannot think how fully I sympathize, Mr. Sanders, with your remark about 'modern misses,'" said Madame d'Héricourt, when the door had closed. "I fancy I see in it an evidence that you would agree with some of my notions about education, which many persons tell me are old-fashioned, and not in keeping with the progress of the age."

"Progress, indeed! I wonder what we are progressing to," replied Sanders.

"There is a good deal of over-teaching and defective education in the present day, I am inclined to think," said the lady.

"Madame," said Sanders, "do you see, I am an uneducated man myself. I mean I had little or no teaching in my boyhood, and was put out to learn my trade when quite a lad. The little I know I have picked up or taught myself; so I have scarce a right to an opinion about education; but we have all of us got our impressions, or prejudices, which you will. Now my prejudices are in favour of King Solomon's ideas. He must have known something about that matter, as he was so wise. He thought a youth should be trained in the way he should go; he did not say, 'Stuff his head full of knowledge.'"

Madame d'Héricourt laughed, and assured her visitor that her prejudices entirely resembled his own and King Solomon's.

"You see, Madame," continued Sanders, "I had only two girls. What I should have done with a boy I cannot say; it was never a practical question. I married the daughter of my employer; and, if ever there was a good soul, it was my wife, Francesca. Her mother was an

Italian, so the child was brought up a Catholic. All I have in the way of devotion, I must confess, I owe mainly to her ; for I was a very sorry Catholic when I left England. Well, my wife and I agreed that we would train up the children at home. Our circumstances were very limited then ; so we could not afford many masters, and I could not abide the idea of a governess. Francesca taught them what she knew herself, which I, at least, thought enough for them. We might have sent them to a convent, it is true, for their education, but I could not bear to part with my treasures, nor did I wish them to come to love any place or any friends, however excellent, better than their home and their parents perhaps. May be I was jealous and selfish."

"Much as I esteem convent education," replied Madame d'Héricourt, "and in many cases reckon it the best, still where there is a good mother, able and willing to devote herself to the training of her girls, nothing, in my opinion, can surpass a home education for them. Many reasons make me think so, but few mothers can or will make the needful sacrifices ; and then the inordinate notions prevalent as to the amount of accomplishments required, and the time necessary to be allotted to lessons, even in the case of very young children, of course greatly increase the difficulties in the way of mothers undertaking tuition."

"My children were not burdened with lessons, certainly," said Sanders ; "I was quite against the practice. They were a great deal with their mother, however, and learnt I scarce know how. Teresa—she alone remains to me now—has not grown up idle or ignorant, however. Besides all her practical knowledge, which I am inclined to think children generally love acquiring a deal better than poring over books, she is very fond of reading. Italian, of course, she speaks like a native, and French quite fluently ; she has also taught herself German. She composes very pretty

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poetry, too—generally hymns to our Lady or Santa Rosalia, or such-like ; and I hear her singing them—for she sings very sweetly—to airs which she has herself set them to ; and it does my heart good ; but I am afraid I shall tire you with all these family matters.”

“Quite the contrary, Mr. Sanders ; I assure you nothing could interest me more. Besides, the subject of education has naturally much occupied my thoughts. I am inclined to your view, that children should not be burdened with lessons, especially at an early age. Much can be taught, and is better taught, by word of mouth. It is the natural source of information to the young, and they will often be led by this means to interest themselves in subjects which in books they would have found dry and even unintelligible. Children are great questioners, as I dare say you know ; but the power of study is an after-growth. I fancy also that mistakes are made with reference to what is called idleness. There is such a thing, I know, and its symptoms are unmistakable, but much which is called idling in young things is not idleness. They should never be allowed to idle over their work or lessons, of course ; but often they will choose an occupation or amusement, which we please to call an idle one, and yet it is, very likely, one in which they are really learning something in their own way. I used to interfere very little with my children’s way of amusing and employing themselves when lessons were over, but left them to themselves, if they were doing nothing faulty.”

“It is the way our Heavenly Father deals with us,” said Sanders. “He respects our liberty.”

“Yes, I feel that very strongly,” said Madame d’Héricourt ; “and accordingly, while loving discipline, I have always disliked what may be called *drill*.”

“I heartily go along with you, Madame,” rejoined Sanders ; “the drilled creature, having never enjoyed inno-

cent liberty, takes it out in license when it gets free. So when the young lady escapes from the school-room and 'comes out,' as they call it, she plunges into her novels and her balls, like a mad thing. That is about the upshot, I take it. In France, where they do not allow their young ladies to launch out freely, the misfortune is that this takes place very often after marriage, which is worse."

"Most true," replied Madame d'Héricourt; "that is a subject—I mean that of the marriage of children—upon which there is much to give cause for anxious reflection; but I suspect that there is a faultiness in the previous education, as well as in the customs of society, which leads to this abuse. When the French girl leaves her convent school, armed with all its pious associations, but still at an age which is very impressionable, an age when virtue has not become fortified by independent action, she goes back, not seldom, I fear, to a very frivolous home, where she finds quite a different code prevailing from that under which she has hitherto been reared. Her heart becomes infected by the worldly atmosphere which surrounds her, and is seduced by the glimpses of worldly amusement, of which she has the sight and prospect, but for the full enjoyment of which she looks forward to the emancipation of marriage. However, there are very happy exceptions, and I know many a blessed and Christian French home."

"To marry your daughter is certainly a very weighty business," said Sanders; "fortunately my girl has no turn that way."

"You have not brought her over with you, Mr. Sanders,—have you?"

"No, I have left her with her two good aunts. She is very delicate, and I fear any risk for her. You see, I have lost, within the last three years, both her mother and her sister from decline. This makes me anxious."

"You have, indeed, been heavily afflicted; but I trust,

God will spare you your remaining treasure," said Madame d'Héricourt.

"If He does, it will be to take her Himself—His holy will be done"; and Sanders bowed his head and crossed himself. "Teresa hopes she has a vocation," he resumed; "and her health alone at present interferes with her trying it. My home will certainly be a little desolate at first without her smiling face and cheerful voice; but I do not grudge her—no, God is my witness—I do not grudge her to Him."

Madame d'Héricourt felt deeply moved; but before she could speak Gertrude entered. Her uncle smiled affectionately at her, and said, "There comes my pretty niece; I want to take her back with me."

As the visitors rose to take leave, Madame d'Héricourt said, "I do not know whether there will be any impropriety in my asking you, Mr. Sanders, to join our quiet party on Wednesday, or whether your stay in London is too short for your relations to spare you."

"My sister and good brother-in-law wish me to make myself quite at home, so I have no doubt they will spare me. What say you, Gertrude?"

"If Gertrude will come also, I shall be delighted," added Madame d'Héricourt. "We expect two priests, the one a very old friend of ours, a Frenchman, the other an Italian, who has been giving a Retreat at Hatton Garden, and is staying now with the priests attached to Warwick-street Chapel. You may doubtless know him by reputation, Padre Giglio."

"Padre Giglio!" exclaimed Sanders, clapping his hands. "To be sure I know him, and well too. He was in Palermo two years ago. I shall be very glad indeed to meet him again. There is a plan of going to Richmond to-morrow, but I suppose we shall be back the next day."

"Oh, yes," said Gertrude; "we are to return late that

same evening, I believe; and I will ask Mama to let me come," she added, addressing Madame d'Héricourt. "I should so like it."

"Do, my dear; but I fear our hour will scarcely suit you. We must dine at a quarter past six, for the Padre has to leave us early."

Gertrude had no objection.

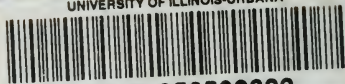
"All right," said Sanders, taking his hat and shaking hands cordially with Madame d'Héricourt, "we will be here to the moment, punctually."

"I do like Mr. Sanders very much," said Madame d'Héricourt to her daughter Anne, on her return to the sitting-room at the close of the drawing-lesson. "I quite feel that I have made a friend."

"Mama," said Anne, rather timidly, after her mother had mentioned the proposed dinner-party, "I wish you would ask Mr. Rochfort. He has been here very seldom lately, and we are going away so soon. Will he not feel it unfriendly if we—you, I mean—do not care to see something more of him, before we leave? I really wish you would ask him; I should be so sorry he was hurt. I have a great regard for Mr. Rochfort, Mama, though—though—" but Anne thought it best to leave that clause of the sentence unfinished—"and I should be quite vexed to think he should take anything unkindly. I fancy he has looked grave and sad lately. Perhaps he thinks we have neglected him for our new friends. It was Pauline remarked this change in him, and of course it may be all nonsense, but anyhow it is best—is it not, Mama?—to ask him. It is the sort of party which would suit him."

"I will ask him, my dear," replied her mother; and no more was said on the subject.

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